

Thesis  
3680

**UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING**

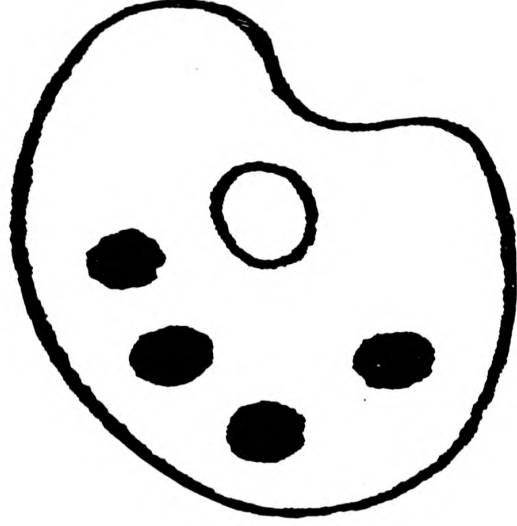
**Jane Patricia Stewart**  
**Department of English Studies**

**The Looking-Glass of Empire:  
Early Feminist Interrogation of the Colonial Patriarchy, 1850-1950**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**  
**November 2000**

~~10/60~~

# NUMEROUS ORIGINALS IN COLOUR



## **Abstract**

### **The Looking-Glass of Empire: Early Feminist Interrogation of the Colonial Patriarchy, 1850-1950**

This thesis contends that there is a substantial body of protofeminist and feminist fiction by colonial women writers which offers a critique of imperialism; indeed, because it challenges white male discourse in an imperial setting and in the domestic setting of the 'home' colony, it shares many characteristics with postcolonial literatures. Close textual study of examples from this body of writing from the white settler colonies and from India reveals that colonial feminists countered masculinist discourse in four closely imbricated areas: gender, race, class, and history.

Central to the development of this genre, which is assessed against Elaine Showalter's study of the female literary tradition, is the female adaptation of the male *Bildungsroman* as a means of challenging patriarchal constructions of womanhood. These were founded on the scopophilic gaze and symbolized in art and literature through the mirror as icon of transgressive female behaviour. The thesis is organized chronologically, and, over the period under discussion, colonial feminist writers move from expressing their preoccupation with female entrapment within the male gaze to assertions of female nationhood in which a fresh sense of the female self is constructed through the medium of writing, rather than through the looking-glass.

Although links are recognized between the writing of white colonial feminists and postcolonial literatures, few studies have undertaken a comprehensive examination of white women's literature across the empire as a whole. The thesis confirms the presence of oppositional white voices during the colonial era and points to ways in which colonial women's writing can be regarded as a cohesive corpus which builds from generation to generation.

## Contents

List of Illustrations.....	
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: The Gendered Frame.....	20
Chapter Two: Writing Home: Dramas of Exile.....	66
Chapter Three: Writes of Passage: Feminism and the Colonial <i>Bildungsroman</i> .....	100
Chapter Four: "History, real solemn history...": Re-imag(in)ing the Empire.....	157
Chapter Five: Shadow Sisters: Alterity in the Looking-Glass.....	212
Conclusion.....	252
Bibliography.....	257
Appendix containing Illustrations.....	272



## List of Illustrations

(Note: Reproductions of all illustrations were provided for the purpose of Ph.D examination. The constraints of copyright law preclude the reproduction of all of them in the copies of this thesis subsequently lodged in the public sphere, however, details of those included are given in bold type. The locations or sources of all paintings and drawings are supplied, where known.)

**Frontispiece: 'The Looking-Glass Department of the Great Exhibition', Punch's Almanac for 1851, Punch, Vol. XX, January- June 1851.**

### Chapter One:

- Fig. 1.1 Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *Bocca baciata*, (1859); Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
- Fig. 1.2 Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *Fazio's Mistress*, (1863); the Tate Gallery, London.
- Fig. 1.3 Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *Lady Lilith*, (1864); Bancroft Collection, Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, Delaware.
- Fig. 1.4 William Holman Hunt: *The Awakening Conscience*, (1853); the Tate Gallery, London.
- Fig. 1.5 William Holman Hunt: *The Lady of Shalott*, engraving for the Moxon edition of Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *The Lady of Shalott*; (1857)**
- Fig. 1.6 William Holman Hunt: *The Lady of Shalott*, (c. 1886-1905); Manchester City Art Galleries.
- Fig. 1.7 George Frederic Watts: *Found Drowned*, (1848-50); Watts Gallery, Compton, nr. Guildford.
- Fig. 1.8 Hablôt K. Browne: *The River*, in Charles Dickens: *David Copperfield*, (1849-50)**
- Fig. 1.9 John Everett Millais: *The Bridge of Sighs*, in *Passages from the Poems of Thomas Hood, Illustrated by the Junior Etching Club*, (1858)**
- Fig. 1.10 Gustave Doré: *The Bridge of Sighs*, in *Poems by Thomas Hood, Illustrated by Gustave Doré*, (1878)**
- Fig. 1.11 Gustave Doré: *The Bridge of Sighs*, in *Poems by Thomas Hood, Illustrated by Gustave Doré*, (1878)**
- Fig. 1.12 Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *The Gate of Memory*, (1857); trustees of Mrs Janet Camp Troxell.
- Figs. 1.13-15 Augustus Leopold Egg: *Past and Present*, (1858); the Tate Gallery, London.
- Fig. 1.16 Richard Redgrave: *The Sempstress*, (1846); Forbes Magazine Collection, New York.
- Fig. 1.17 George Frederic Watts: *The Seamstress*, (1850); whereabouts unknown.
- Fig. 1.18 'Needle Money', *Punch*, Vol. XVII, July-December, 1849.**
- Fig. 1.19 'Pin money', *Punch*, Vol. XVII, July-December, 1849.**
- Fig. 1.20 'The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad', *Punch*, Vol. XVII, January-June, 1850.**

- Fig. 1.21 Richard Redgrave: *The Governess*, (1845); Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- Fig. 1.22 Ford Madox Brown: *The Last of England* (1855); Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.
- Fig. 1.23 Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, (1848-9); the Tate Gallery, London.
- Fig. 1.24 Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini*, (1855); the Tate Gallery, London.

#### Chapter Three:

- Fig. 3.1 Tom Roberts: *The Breakaway*, (1891); Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.
- Fig. 3.2 Tom Roberts: *The Golden Fleece: Shearing at Newstead*, (1894); the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
- Fig. 3.3 Tom Roberts: *Shearing the Rams*, (1890); National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Fig. 3.4 Frederick McCubbin: *On the Wallaby Track*, (1896); the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
- Fig. 3.5 Charles Conder: *Springtime*, (1888); National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Fig. 3.6 Charles Conder: *Herrick's Blossoms*, (1889); National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

#### Chapter Four:

- Fig. 4.1 Lady Elizabeth Butler: *The Flag*, (1898); private collection.
- Fig. 4.2 'Sketch map of the route to King Solomon's Mines', in W. Rider Haggard: *King Solomon's Mines*, (1886)
- Fig. 4.3 Frontispiece to Olive Schreiner: *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (first edition), T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1897; captioned 'From a photograph'.

#### Chapter Five:

- Fig. 5.1 Emily Carr: *Totem Mothers, Kitwancool*, (1928); Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver.
- Fig. 5.2 Emily Carr: *D'Sonoqua*, (1928); Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver.
- Fig. 5.3 'The Political Topsy', *Punch*, Vol. XXIII, July-December, 1852.
- Fig. 5.4 Thomas Daniell: *A Zenana Scene*, (1804); private collection.
- Fig. 5.5 Thomas Daniell: *The Nautch*, (1810); private collection.
- Fig. 5.6 William Daniell: *The Favourite of the Harem*, (1829); whereabouts unknown.
- Fig. 5.7 John Frederick Lewis: *The Hhareem*, (1849); private collection.
- Fig. 5.8 John Frederick Lewis: *The Hhareem*, (ca. 1850); Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- Fig. 5.9 'The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger', *Punch*, 22 August 1857.
- Fig. 5.10 'Willing Hands for India', *Punch*, 29 August 1857.
- Fig. 5.11 'Justice', *Punch*, 12 September 1857.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks and appreciation for support whilst researching and writing this thesis are due to a great many people. On a personal basis I am grateful to my family, Boyne, Michael, and Kate, and to my friend, Margaret, for their unfailing interest and encouragement.

In the academic world, I have also benefited from help, advice, and camaraderie from many quarters. In particular, I wish to thank my supervisor, Angela Smith, and the following:

Vance Adair  
Glennis Byron  
Renata Casertano  
Janette Currie  
John Drakakis  
Val Letcher  
Robert H. MacDonald  
Douglas Mack  
Sudesh Mishra  
Gerta Moray  
Stephanie Newell  
Maggie Nolan  
James Proctor  
David Reid  
Susan Reid  
Grahame Smith  
Mardi Stewart  
Dennis Walder  
Rory Watson

I should also like to thank the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, for their kind permission to include paintings by Charles Conder.

**The Looking-Glass of Empire:  
Early Feminist Interrogation of the Colonial Patriarchy, 1850-1950**



'The Looking-Glass Department of the Great Exhibition',  
Punch's Almanac for 1851, *Punch*, Vol. XX, January- June 1851.

## Introduction

To undeceive the sight a detached instrument like a mirror is necessary.<sup>1</sup>

§§§

This thesis argues that, from 1850 onwards, certain novels by white colonial women writers manifest a feminist, or profeminist, critique of white patriarchal power and imperial ideology. Significantly, this critique embodies some of the oppositional characteristics of literatures now known collectively as postcolonial literatures, many of which were produced in the aftermath of empire by black and white indigenous writers from former British colonies.<sup>2</sup> I pursue two parallel primary strands of inquiry. Firstly, I maintain that colonial women's writing is a distinctive corpus which continues to evolve throughout the period under study. In order to assess its progress and characteristics I discuss it against the tradition of women's writing which Elaine Showalter identifies in her ground-breaking work, *A Literature of Their Own*, as having flourished in Britain during the same era.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, I examine profeminist and feminist counterdiscourse in a selection of fictional works by white colonial women writers and consider them against the background of the varied and often contradictory discourses of gender, race, and class influential in the subjection of women and of black and white indigenous peoples.

Fundamental to this second, but by no means secondary, strand is my contention that, during the period under study, white patriarchy maintained hegemonic control over women through the propagation of a series of interconnecting gender discourses placing all aspects of the female under the close scrutiny of the male gaze. This led to

---

<sup>1</sup>Frame, Janet: 'The Pocket Mirror', in *The Pocket Mirror*, George Braziller, New York, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>I use 'postcolonial' in the sense suggested by Ashcroft *et al*, and various critics since, "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day ...because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression". (Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin: *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*, Routledge, London, 1989, p. 2) Thus, I apply 'postcolonial' to writing of a contestatory nature, in the same way as Boehmer uses the term: "Rather than simply being the writing which 'came after' empire, *postcolonial* literature is that which critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives. ...*postcoloniality* is defined as that condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical subjects". (Boehmer, Elleke: *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 3)

<sup>3</sup>Showalter, Elaine: *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Bronte to Doris Lessing*, Virago, London, 1999 (revised and expanded edition); first published by Virago, London, 1978. Showalter's chronological schema and her pragmatic feminism, offer a useful template against which to measure colonial women's writing.

the categorization of 'woman' and the generation of a multiplicity of stereotypes of womanhood predicated on two core 'types', the Angel in the House or Madonna, and its obverse, the Fallen Woman or Magdalene. The intensity of the focus levelled on woman, and the insistent binarism of these archetypes with their immanent presupposition that women failing to conform to the former must inevitably be consigned as the latter, entailed that womankind was constructed through the critical lens of the male gaze as being always potentially fallible and therefore inferior.

In essence, these gender discourses both established and mirrored a normative ideal of 'feminine' conduct and appearance. As Simone de Beauvoir explains, women have long been held in thrall by the images of femininity to which they are expected to conform; women are, she says, "captured" by their appearance "in the motionless, silvered trap" of the mirror.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as I shall argue, because the gender discourses circulating at the time pervaded most aspects of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture, not only was woman acculturated through the mirroring effect of the male gaze, but woman's capacity to construct a coherent sense of the female self was also impaired. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have dubbed this restrictive construction of woman through the controlling male gaze "the distorting mirrors of patriarchy", and argue that it is a form of entrapment which leads to a literary preoccupation with the search for the self: "To be caught and trapped in a mirror rather than a window, ...is to be driven inward, obsessively studying self-images as if seeking a viable self".<sup>5</sup>

Although mirrors are frequently juxtaposed to women in literature and in art, more often than not in masculinist discourse this juxtaposition is used to connote woman's narcissism or even an awareness of the potency of female sexual allure. Significantly, however, at a certain stage in the evolution of colonial women's writing, a number of the writers examined deploy the looking-glass as a specifically female symbol of woman's acculturation or entrapment under patriarchy so that it comes to represent woman's search for the female self. In doing so, it seems that not only are these writers consciously subverting the masculinist iconography of the mirror, but also that they are

---

<sup>4</sup>de Beauvoir, Simone: *The Second Sex* (translated and edited by H.M. Parshley), Picador, London, 1988, p. 643; first published as *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Gallimard, France, 1949.

<sup>5</sup>Gilbert, Sandra M., & Susan Gubar: *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1979, pp. 284 & 37.

aware that they are reversing the male gaze by engaging with and controverting hegemonic discourse.

In order to focus on the colonial feminist writers' subversion of woman-and-mirror symbolism, in the opening chapter of this thesis I examine the way in which the woman-and-mirror iconography is figured in the masculinist discourse to be found in some paintings by male members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Likewise, in the first chapter and throughout the thesis, I also discuss genre paintings and *Punch* illustrations featuring a number of different female stereotypes.<sup>6</sup> The study of these representations of womanhood is crucial to my argument because not only were the pictures themselves another form of male mirroring, but they were also the cultural currency of the social groups responsible for generating hegemonic discourse.

As Anne McClintock points out in *Imperial Leather* (1995), her broadly-based study of gender, race, and class, these are "articulated categories" and because they are closely imbricated, "gender dynamics were ...fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise".<sup>7</sup> The underlying thesis of her book accords with mine in many ways, but whereas I draw on the discursive tropes figured in the artistic representations circulating chiefly amongst the middle and upper classes, she draws on cultural evidence which permeated all levels of society.<sup>8</sup> Illustrating how white male mastery was enabled through the male gaze and multifarious acts of seeing, recording, and categorizing, she argues that the white middle class male was asserted as the ideal standard of modernity against which all other categories of people were measured, with the result that women, the colonized, and the industrial working class are figured as "prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place".<sup>9</sup> As McClintock shows, the male gaze ranged freely: the Great Exhibition (1851) "converted panoptical

---

<sup>6</sup>Where possible under the constraints of copyright law the paintings discussed are illustrated in the Appendix to this thesis.

<sup>7</sup>McClintock, Anne: *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Routledge, London 1995, pp. 4-5 & 7.

<sup>8</sup>Interestingly, McClintock also identifies the mirror as a recurring icon in Victorian gender discourse, but here our perspectives diverge. Although she acknowledges that it is related to a wife's "exhibition status", she links the mirror itself to the cult of domesticity and cleanliness, which she sees as being emblematic of attention paid to surface and reflection, and the policing of public/physical boundaries. (McClintock, 1995, pp. 218-9) In contrast, I read the recurring presence of the mirror in certain paintings of women as a male signifier of female sexual transgression.

<sup>9</sup>McClintock, 1995, p. 40.

surveillance into consumer pleasure”;<sup>10</sup> the invention of the camera (1839) furthered the “panoptical power of collection, display and discipline” enabling the recording of imperial progress, the anthropologizing of mankind, and the documentation of “the bodily image of female hysteria” in order to “confirm the authority of male science over the female body”;<sup>11</sup> on ephemera, such as soap wrappers, biscuit tins, and advertising material, the empire was reconstituted in the domestic sphere, and imperial progress represented, in the way in which Britain straddles the world triumphantly, bringing enlightenment in the form of cleanliness or manufactured food to the ‘disadvantaged’ races also figured.

The starting point of the period under study in this thesis, 1850, has been determined by the emergence of feminism, discussed below, by the intense interest in female emigration from Britain at this time, by the augmentation of empire as the result of the transfer of power from the East India Company to the Crown following the Indian ‘Mutiny’ in 1857, and by the fact that two texts by colonial women writers, still held to be significant in the literary histories of their adoptive countries on opposite sides of the globe, appeared almost simultaneously in the early 1850s. Susanna Moodie’s *Roughing it in the Bush*, about emigrant life in Canada, and Catherine Helen Spence’s *Clara Morison*, about emigrant life in Australia, were published in London in 1852 and 1854 respectively. Although both had emigrated during the 1830s, by the 1850s, as I argue in Chapter One, not only was female emigration topical, but it had become one of the foci of contemporaneous gender discourse. There was, therefore, an eager market for literature on the subject written from the colonies by women.

Similarly, the close of the period under study, 1950, has also been influenced by events in the literary sphere and by a perceptible change in British and world-wide attitudes towards imperialism at around this time. The Partition of India and the granting of Indian Independence in 1947 signalled the demise of the British empire; the Suez crisis in the mid-1950s and the 1955 Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian nations proclaiming an anti-colonial viewpoint followed closely. The period under study concludes in the early 1950s in order to demonstrate continuity between the corpus originating in the

---

<sup>10</sup>McClintock, 1995, p. 59.

<sup>11</sup>McClintock, 1995, pp. 123 & 124.



1850s, which I have identified as colonial women's writing, and work by writers, such as Jean Rhys and Doris Lessing, who are more widely recognised as being allied to the issues of postcoloniality also identified in writing by black, indigenous writers.

The texts discussed in this thesis have been selected following wide-ranging research to determine the dynamics of the colonial women's literary tradition, its scale, and its patterns. Some works are given close textual readings, others are considered more briefly to demonstrate the way in which colonial feminists from throughout the globe expand or develop the ideology of their contemporaries and the preceding generation of colonial women writers. Thus this study is not just a literary history but it is also analytical. Although many examples of polemic are available in colonial women's writing, I have chosen to concentrate on fiction because it is a genre in which feminist vision and aspirations are given free rein, and in which an originality of thought and inventiveness of style are also apparent. Some books, such as Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* and Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), are now considered to be classics of their kind; others, such as Robin Hyde's *The Godwits Fly* (1938) and Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Burnt Offering* (1909), are little-known texts whose authors are only now being acknowledged for their achievement. The unifying characteristic is the writers' recognition that the elements of power and control behind imperial hegemony are also those governing the circumscription of women. Thus each text has been read from a twin perspective with the aim of eliciting the writers' feminist and/or anti-imperial points of view and contextualizing these against the male-centred discourses they interrogate.

In arguing that colonial feminist counterdiscourse forms a cohesive body of literary work challenging domination by white patriarchy, I am not only aware that there are many shades or gradations of feminism, but I am also mindful of Judith Butler's words which caution against approaching patriarchy as a monolith:

The very notion of 'patriarchy' has threatened to become a universalizing concept that overrides or reduces distinct articulations of gender asymmetry in different cultural contexts.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>Butler, Judith: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 35.

This thesis examines gender asymmetry in a colonial setting, but it seeks to expose and explicate some of the ways in which male domination was achieved and maintained by considering 'patriarchy' as the range of cultural discourses, defined by McClintock as articulated categories, which were promoted both in the colony and in the metropolis by white male hegemonic groups. I am also concerned to stress the heterogeneity of female *and* male experience in Britain and in the colonies during the period in question; this is reflected in the multitude of different discourses circulating at the time.<sup>13</sup>

Across the empire there was a marked disparity in white women's experience, a factor also confirmed by the texts examined. The poverty-stricken existences, and accompanying back-breaking toil, borne by many white women in the settler colonies, such as Mrs Melvyn in Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* (1901), is almost as far removed from the pampered, well-servanted lives of the *memsahibs* in India, such as Alice Gissing in Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters* (1897), as it is possible to be, and between these two extremes stood a wide spectrum of experience. However, most white colonial women were, as McClintock points out, the adjuncts of white men and subject to white patriarchal power:

Barred from the corridors of formal power, they experienced the privileges and social contradictions of imperialism very differently from colonial men. Whether they were shipped out as convicts or conscripted into sexual and domestic servitude; whether they served discreetly at the elbow of power as colonial officers' wives, upholding the boundaries of empire and bearing its sons and daughters; whether they ran missionary schools or hospital wards in remote outposts or worked their husbands' shops and farms, colonial women made none of the direct economic or military decisions of empire and very few reaped its vast profits. Marital laws, property laws, land laws and the intractable violence of male decree bound them in gendered patterns of disadvantage and frustration. The vast, fissured architecture of imperialism was gendered throughout by the fact that it was white men who made and enforced laws and policies in their own interests.<sup>14</sup>

It is that range of female experience in the British colonies which makes white colonial women hard to locate theoretically. On the one hand, they were subject to white male hegemony, but on the other, as I discuss below, their alignment with the sources of

---

<sup>13</sup>Some of these were, like colonial feminist counterdiscourse, also oppositional, there were many formal and informal philanthropical movements with concerns in Britain or overseas during the nineteenth century, such as the *Morning Chronicle* surveys of the poor, anti-slavery campaigns, and the Aborigines Protection Society. Opposition also found expression in social-purpose novels, such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), or novels such as Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863) highlighting the plight of chimney boys.

<sup>14</sup>McClintock, 1995, p. 6.

power placed them in a more fortunate position than that of many of the black people with whom they came in contact.

### Critical contexts: colonial women, postcolonial theories

Arguing for interdisciplinary approaches such as the one taken in this thesis, Edward Said maintains that it is at the points at which disciplinary discourses intersect that understanding is augmented and theory is moved forward. He contends that broad analyses:

self-consciously situate themselves at vulnerable conjunctural nodes of ongoing disciplinary discourse where each of them posits nothing less than new objects of knowledge, new praxes of humanist (in the broad sense of the word) activity, new theoretical models that upset or at the very least radically alter the prevailing paradigmatic norms.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the publication of an increasing number of studies in this mode, few have conducted a broad, transnational exploration, such as the one undertaken in this thesis, of the relationship between critiques of empire by white colonial women and those in postcolonial literatures, although the parallels between the literatures of feminism and postcolonial cultures have been widely acknowledged. Indeed, commentary on the analogies between these two perspectives tends to focus on writing by colonial feminists originating from the early twentieth century, or postdating the era of empire altogether, or it foregrounds theoretical similarities without reference to the literary writing of specific authors.<sup>16</sup>

One reason for the apparent reluctance to address the oppositional nature of some writing by colonial women may be that the triangular relationship between white

---

<sup>15</sup>Said, Edward: 'Orientalism Reconsidered', in eds. Francis Barker *et al*, *Europe and Its Others: Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, Vol. 1*, University of Essex Press, Colchester, 1984, p. 24.

<sup>16</sup>For example, in *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin list those women writers from the former colonies whose work they see as noteworthy in this respect: Jean Rhys, Alice Walker, Doris Lessing, Buchi Emecheta, Margaret Atwood, and 'Henry Handel Richardson'; the latter was the *nom de plume* of Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson (1870-1946); her first novel, *Maurice Guest* (1908) was followed by *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910), discussed briefly in Chapter Three of this thesis, and her classic trilogy, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* (1930), first appeared in print from 1917 to 1929. (Ashcroft *et al*, 1989, p. 177) Ashcroft *et al* have more recently stated that "(f)eminism is of crucial interest to post-colonial discourse" because "patriarchy and imperialism can be seen to exert analogous forms of domination", however, they do not situate this correlation historically. (Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin: *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 101) Similarly, Childs and Williams also focus on critical theory, remarking that "(f)eminist and post-colonial theory have much in common as oppositional discourses which attempt to redress an imbalance in society and culture". (Childs, Peter, & Patrick Williams: *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, Longman, Harlow, 1997, p. 200)

women, black indigenes of both sexes, and white patriarchy remains sensitive and even problematic. Although the term "double colonization" to locate white women alongside black women under white patriarchy has now been disavowed, and the debate has evolved with the suggestion that white women in the colonies are "half-colonized", this only partially theorizes the standpoint of dissentient white women during the colonial era.<sup>17</sup> Oppositional writing by black women under colonialism or postcolonialism appears to have been explored more fully than that of some white women. Benita Parry's critique of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theories of subalternity and the suppression of native female and male voices, has shown that conceptualizing 'natives' as silent subalterns can be seen as limiting because this "gives no speaking voice to the colonized".<sup>18</sup> Indeed, black women, in particular, are seen as being disadvantaged both by imperialism and by more local forms of patriarchal control.

Two contentious issues seem to stand in the way of locating white colonial women's opposition to imperialism. Firstly, there is the problem of situating the literature of white settler colonies in relation to those of other colonies, and secondly, white women have been charged with complicity in imperialism by virtue of their proximity to white hegemony and the ways in which they may have benefitted from this. In the first case, attempts to explicate a theoretical position for oppositional white writing from former colonies have tended to subsume settler experience and settler counterdiscourse under one heading, thereby suggesting a homogeneity across all settler cultures which does not exist. For example, Stephen Slemon has found it helpful to consider settler cultures "as inhabiting a 'Second World' of discursive polemics". The "space" from which these settler cultures speak is neither First-World, nor Third- or Fourth World:

there is a contradiction within the dominant trajectory of First-World post-colonial critical theory ...- for that same theory which argues persuasively for the necessary *ambivalence* of post-colonial literary resistance, and which works to emplace that resistance squarely *between* First- and Third-world structures of representation, *also* wants to assign 'Second World' or ex-colonial settler literatures unproblematically to the category of the literature of empire, the literature of the First World, precisely

---

<sup>17</sup>Petersen, Kirsten Holst, & Anna Rutherford: *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post Colonial Women's Writing*, Dangaroo Press, Mundelstrup, 1986. Holst Petersen and Rutherford draw the works of white women and black women together under the term "a double colonization". Visel, Robin: 'Half Colonization: The Problem of the White Colonial Woman Writer', in *Kunapipi*, vol. X, no. 3, 1988, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup>Parry, Benita: 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', in *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2, 1987, p. 35.

*because of its ambivalent position with the First-World/Third World, colonizer/colonized binary.*<sup>19</sup>

However, as Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, amongst others, have pointed out, settler societies did not follow similar trajectories to those of most other colonized territories, because of their "dominion status in the British Empire, their economic prosperity, their large white settler communities, and their ethnic make-up".<sup>20</sup>

The second factor, that of white female complicity, is equally problematic, bound up as it is with the charge that, in issues of race and class, middle-class Western norms predominate. Moreover, as McClintock explains, white colonial women were not solely "the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting".<sup>21</sup> Three separate, recent studies have examined ways in which white women negotiate power through contact with black peoples.<sup>22</sup> Ruth Frankenberg argues that, in America, white women's senses of self are predicated upon a racial power dynamic fostered by a belief in white female superiority over black women. Antoinette Burton contends that some British feminists "viewed feminism itself as the agent of imperial progress", and, in order to prove British women worthy of being granted the vote, took up the 'cause' of Indian women by becoming involved, for example, in campaigns to end child marriage and *sati*, or to bring about better conditions for widows or *zenana* women. Thus Indian women were "retailed throughout feminist writing as foils to the progress of Western imperial women".<sup>23</sup> Indira Ghose's examination of the way in which, in colonial India,

<sup>19</sup>Slomon, Stephen: 'Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World', in *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1990), pp. 38 & 37.

<sup>20</sup>Childs & Williams, 1997, p. 84. Maintaining that "there has been too swift a move to call the settler communities post-colonial", they point to ongoing debate about the status of settler colonies. Margaret Laurence claims that Canadians are 'Third-World' writers because they have had to discover their own voices in the face of "overwhelming cultural imperialism"; Linda Hutcheon has responded that such claims trivialize Third-World experience whilst aggrandizing that of settler cultures. (Childs & Williams, 1997, p. 85; they cite Hutcheon's 'Circling the Downspout of Empire', in eds. Adam, Ian & Helen Tiffin: *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-colonialism and Post-Modernism*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1991, p. 171)

<sup>21</sup>McClintock, 1995, p. 6

<sup>22</sup>Frankenberg, Ruth: *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Constructedness of Whiteness*, Routledge, New York, 1993; Burton, Antoinette: *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1994; Ghose, Indira: *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.

<sup>23</sup>Burton, 1994, pp. 12 & 18. See also Burton's 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and 'Global Sisterhood,' 1900-1915', in *The Journal of Women's History*, vol. 3, no. 2, Fall 1991, and 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and 'the Indian Woman,' 1865-1915', in (eds.) Continued on next page...

white female travellers' gazes mediated the country and its inhabitants concludes that there is "no specifically female gaze", but a "wide spectrum of gazes". Nevertheless, she maintains that Englishwomen's accounts of Indian women's lives legitimized patriarchal interference in Indian affairs, and prolonged colonial rule.<sup>24</sup>

The idea of complicity has also been introduced by Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge in order to liberate postcolonialism from the trammels of historicity or linear chronology, and in an attempt to avoid the homogenizing effect of discussing "one post-colonialism", rather than "many postcolonialisms". They have assigned to the idea of the postcolonial two forms or "ideological orientations", as they term them: the "oppositional" and the "complicit". Although this appears at first to be helpful by indicating that white voices might be oppositional, and black voices might be complicit, they go on to state that the three determinants of the oppositional post-colonial are racism, a second language, and political struggle.<sup>25</sup> Thus, many instances of white writing which appear to be oppositional can be dismissed as not conforming to all of these criteria. Mishra and Hodge acknowledge "points of contact" between feminist and postcolonial theories, and point out that under colonialism or postcolonialism women are "burdened by a twice-disabling discourse: the disabling master discourse of colonialism is then redirected against women in an exact duplication of the colonizer's own use of that discourse *vis-à-vis* the colonized in the first instance".<sup>26</sup> However they do not attempt to distinguish between the relative positions of white women and black women, and therefore, irrespective of race or

---

<sup>23</sup>Continued from previous page...

Nupur Chaudhuri & Margaret Strobel: *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992. Similar arguments are also given in Jenny Sharpe's *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, in Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar's 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', in *Feminist Review*, No. 17, July 1984, and in Janaki Nair's 'Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813-1940', in *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1990.

<sup>24</sup>Ghose, 1998, pp. 158 & 63.

<sup>25</sup>They maintain that "oppositional postcolonialism ... is found in its most overt form in post-independent colonies at the historical phase of 'post-colonialism'". (Mishra, Vijay, & Bob Hodge: 'What is Post(-)colonialism?', in eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman: *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1994, pp. 284 & 286)

<sup>26</sup>Mishra & Hodge, 1994, p. 284; although they do not make it entirely clear, at this juncture the authors appear to be referring to black women as they go on to discuss the work of the black Indian female poet, Mhaddevi Varma.

ideological orientation, all women appear to be subsumed under one homogeneous heading.<sup>27</sup>

The colonial women's texts examined in this thesis can be described as oppositional in their interrogation of white male hegemony, their challenge to British imperial ideology, and their mediation of the plight of colonized peoples, although not in the terms delineated by Mishra and Hodge. As a corpus, colonial women's writing therefore warrants consideration, free from some of the constraints of critical theory, in order to elicit its characteristics. Salman Rushdie has remarked that categorization under terms such as 'Commonwealth Literature' can obscure the dynamics of power being worked out in certain texts: "The existence - or putative existence - of the beast distracts from *what is actually going on*".<sup>28</sup> In this thesis, therefore, rather than formulating a theory of white colonial women's literary writing around which I flex my readings, I anchor my argument against the background of the discourses the texts oppose and in already-established aspects of feminist and postcolonial literary theory, with the aim of showing "what is actually going on" in the texts examined.

Two recent interventions, by Mary Louise Pratt and Laura Chrisman have also examined ways in which white women's writing controverts the imposition of white male hegemony outside Europe. Pratt maintains that her study of travel writing by European men and women reclaims "contestatory expressions from the site of imperial intervention, long ignored in the metropolis; the critique of empire coded ongoingly on the spot".<sup>29</sup> Her chief concern, however, is with transculturation in the 'contact zone', and the ways in which travel writing "produced Europe's differentiated conceptions of itself in relation to ... 'the rest of the world'", rather than with gender politics.<sup>30</sup> One of her central arrogations, that the European traveller benignly captures foreign territory

---

<sup>27</sup>Women also appear to cohere under the heading 'complicit'. The assertion that women are "a fragment", "an oppositional system" within the "overall colonized framework", is juxtaposed against the claim that "(c)omplicit postcolonialism" is "an always present 'underside' within colonization itself". Although Mishra and Hodge concede that the case of "postcolonial women's writing" would require "a different order of theorizing", this is not addressed. Thus it is impossible to avoid the latent suggestion that women function as an always present 'underside' of male hegemony, and that they are, therefore, complicit, rather than truly 'oppositional'. (Mishra & Hodge, 1994, p. 284)

<sup>28</sup>Rushdie, Salman: 'Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist', in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism*, 1981-1991, Granta, London, 1991, p. 64; my emphasis.

<sup>29</sup>Pratt, Mary Louise: *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup>Pratt, 1992, p. 5.

documenting its resources through the possessive “anti-conquest” of the gaze, suggests the writer to be a constituent part of the process authorizing and justifying European incursions into non-European landscapes.<sup>31</sup> Although Pratt does record that some women travellers challenge the inhumane conditions under which indigenes or slaves are required to subsist, and that they describe the “feminotopias”, or “idealized worlds of female autonomy, empowerment, and pleasure” which they encounter, she presents their works as being sociological or even anthropological in outlook, rather than being political.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, Laura Chrisman’s approach in *Rereading the Imperial Romance* (2000) is similar to mine, although she deals solely with Southern African writing. Arguing that there is a “density of ...literary, intertextual relationships” between certain texts by Sol Plaatje, H. Rider Haggard, and Olive Schreiner, Chrisman examines the orientation of anti-imperialist discourse in these works against the background of hegemonic discourse. In order to foreground the correlation between Western feminism and postcolonialism my research focuses solely on white women’s writing, but Chrisman makes the important point that during the ‘Age of Empire’ black writers from Southern Africa were engaged in “a far more radical, complex and ambivalent critique of imperialism than has been recognized”.<sup>33</sup> In particular, Chrisman’s reading of Schreiner’s *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897) accords with my reading in Chapter Four of this thesis, especially in its recognition that this brief, anti-imperialist allegory is much more carefully crafted and densely woven than many critics have hitherto acknowledged.<sup>34</sup> However, whereas Chrisman shows Schreiner as being critical of capitalism’s role in imperialism, I have chosen to focus instead on the ways in which Schreiner’s engages with imperialist discourse and draws analogies between this and the discourses of gender and race.

---

<sup>31</sup>Pratt, 1992, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup>Significant instances of this are Flora Tristan’s interest in social conditions in South America and her critique of slavery, as well as Maria Graham’s empathy towards the poverty-stricken people she encounters. (Pratt, 1992, pp. 160-163, & pp. 166-7)

<sup>33</sup>Chrisman, Laura: *Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Schreiner, and Plaatje*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>34</sup>The completion and submission of this thesis coincided with the publication of Laura Chrisman’s *Rereading the Imperial Romance*. I am grateful to my examiner, Dennis Walder, for drawing Chrisman’s work on *Trooper Peter Halket* to my attention.



### Literatures of Their Own: feminist orientations

Elaine Showalter's influential text, *A Literature of Their Own*, which I take as a point of reference against which to assess colonial women's writing, argues cogently that although the names of few women writers persist in the canon of English literature, there is a female literary tradition. She traces the development of this tradition through three main stages moving from "feminine" "*imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and *internalization* of its standards of art and its view on social roles", to a "feminist" phase of "*protest* against these standards and values, ... *advocacy* of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy", and finally to a "female" stage of "self discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity".<sup>35</sup> Although Showalter acknowledges that the phases overlap and that "(o)ne might ... find all three phases in the career of a single novelist", she dates these phases as being from the 1840s to 1880, from 1880 to 1920, and from 1920 to the present respectively. Showalter's text has perhaps contributed more than any other work in the field to establish a genuine understanding of the nature of women's writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; nevertheless, in light of subsequent debate and broader analytic approaches to research such as those advocated by Said, certain elements of her theory require reconsideration.

In the first place, Showalter's successful case for a women's literary tradition tends to elide all women's writing of each phase into one entity and to regard the texts under discussion from a metropolitan viewpoint. Although she acknowledges that the development of literary subcultures, "such as black, Jewish, Canadian, Anglo-Indian, or even American", has informed her argument, and although she discusses the work of two major female writers born in Southern Africa during the colonial period, Olive Schreiner and Doris Lessing, she makes no explicit links between either the content or style of their writing and their colonial roots.<sup>36</sup> Nor does she address the heterogeneity of women's experience and women's writing in relation to international variations in culture at the height of imperialism or to the developing national literatures of the former settler colonies of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Secondly, whereas her focus on issues relating to the metropolitan centre can be rationalized because as a

<sup>35</sup>Showalter, Elaine: *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing*, Virago, London, 1999, p. 13; first published by Virago, London, 1978.

<sup>36</sup>Showalter, 1999, p. 13.

determination to establish the existence of a coherent body of women's literature on equal terms with the male-biased literary canon which is itself rooted in the cultural hegemony of the metropolis, it is curious that her recovery of women's literary history does not recognize the fact that nineteenth-century women writers were engaged in a similar project, challenging the patriarchal construction of history and replacing it with alternative versions.

Moreover, Showalter's use of the terms 'feminine', 'feminist', and 'female' may tend to blur an understanding of the political positions of feminists whilst, at the same time, foreshortening the history of the feminist movement. In a critique which seeks to explicate Showalter's terminology against the background of feminist ideology, Toril Moi points out that the words 'feminist'/'feminism' indicate "a political position"; 'feminine'/'femininity' represent a cultural construct and can best be defined as "a set of culturally defined characteristics"; 'femaleness' is biologically rather than culturally determined.<sup>37</sup> She argues that whereas the relationship between 'female' and 'feminist' can best be described as the relationship between theory and practice, to employ the term 'feminine' to refer to women's writing of a certain era is to eschew the feminist argument that women are acculturated and to subscribe to the essentialist beliefs promoted by patriarchy that woman is born with a set of defining characteristics given by nature.<sup>38</sup> However, she concludes by conceding that there is a logic in defining as 'feminine' writing which "seems to be marginalised (repressed, silenced) by the ruling social/linguistic order".<sup>39</sup> In this context, Showalter's use of the terms 'feminine' and 'feminist' successfully recognizes a shift in the collective consciousness of women from a culturally created position to a political awareness.

By using the word 'female', Showalter also risks confusing the final phase of women's literary history, which she identifies as being one of self-discovery and of exploration of women's identity, with the phrase 'female writing', a generic term for all women's writing. Bearing this in mind, I use 'female writing' as interchangeable with 'women's

<sup>37</sup>Moi, Toril: 'Feminist, Female, Feminine', in eds. Catherine Belsey & Jane Moore: *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1989, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup>"Although crucially shaped by its anti-patriarchal emphasis on female experience, feminism as a political theory cannot be reduced to a reflection or product of that experience. The Marxist view of the necessary dialectical relationship between theory and practice also applies to the relationship between female experience and feminist politics." (Moi, 1989, p. 121)

<sup>39</sup>Moi, 1989, p. 132.

writing' and Showalter's usage of the phrase is carefully distinguished on the occasions where I refer to her schema. Finally, it is important to point out that by designating the central phase of protest and advocacy of minority rights as 'feminist', Showalter's schema appears to suggest that the feminist struggle for women's rights began around 1880 and ceased around 1920, whereas it began much earlier and is continuing even now, at the start of the twenty-first century, in many countries across the globe.

Quite apart from the issues raised by Showalter's terminology, the use of 'feminist' and 'feminism' to define involvement in the early women's rights movements is also contentious as they might be regarded as anachronistic. Although I describe those women who challenged their position under patriarchy during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as 'feminists', this is a word which did not enter common usage until the final decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> However, the proliferation of terms which were in use during the latter half of the nineteenth century to describe the burgeoning women's rights movements tend to be unwieldy or to restrict an understanding of the multiplicity of women's situations and demands by focusing on the struggle for woman suffrage.<sup>41</sup>

The exact point of the emergence of feminism as a recognizable and cohesive force is also contentious. According to Philippa Levine, this is often erroneously situated in the opening decades of the twentieth century, but she places it much earlier:

Beginning in the late 1850s with the establishment of the London-based Langham Place Circle, the Kensington Society and the early committees contesting the legal void which was the married woman, the latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed a series of connected, skilfully managed and high profile campaigns around a wide variety of issues closely concerning women. Despite the substantial amount of recent literature documenting this growing activity, there is still a tendency in historical circles to

<sup>40</sup>Charles Fourier is sometimes falsely credited with coining the word 'féminisme'; however, the term was used by Hubertine Auclert, from 1882 in her periodical, *La Citoyenne*, to describe herself and her associates. Translations of the terms *féminisme* and *masculisme* were being used in Britain by 1894-95, and elsewhere in Europe by the turn of the century. (Offen, Karen: 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', in *Signs*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Autumn 1988, p. 126) 'Feminism' is given as "(t)he quality of females" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1901), but 'feminist' is not included. An early use of 'feminist' is given in the *O.E.D.* (1989): "The lady Parliamentary reporter is the latest development of the feminist movement in New Zealand" (*Daily Chronicle*, 15.10.1895), suggesting that the word travelled rapidly from Europe, and that, by this time, feminism was already a recognizable movement.

<sup>41</sup>Under the heading "woman", the *O.E.D.* (1989) lists "women's rights" (Thackeray, 1840), "woman question" (Letter from George Eliot, 21 September 1857), "woman suffrage" (*Times*, 1867), "woman movement" (*Harper's Magazine*, August 1883, 468/2), and "New Woman" (*North American Review*, May 1884, 616).

identify the militant minority in early twentieth-century feminism as both the prototype and the moment of the 'true' emergence of the women's movement.<sup>42</sup>

There is considerable evidence for taking the 1850s as the starting point of what is now known as feminism, for, despite its innocuous-sounding name, the Langham Place Circle was a network of influence which spawned numerous organizations to promote women's rights and female employment.<sup>43</sup> By this time, too, Caroline Norton's spirited pamphleteering campaign in defence of women's matrimonial rights had been instrumental in raising awareness of feminist issues. Yet feminism then, as now, was not a homogeneous entity to which specific feminist political positions could be matched. In the nineteenth century, the issue of woman's emplacement in society elicited impassioned feelings and a wide spectrum of views and beliefs, not least amongst women themselves, as evidenced by the fact that Norton distanced herself from other women's rights campaigns.<sup>44</sup> I use 'feminist', therefore, to describe those women whose works were emancipatory in nature, and who actively challenged the patriarchal *status quo*, irrespective of their stated position *vis-à-vis* specific women's rights issues.

Simone de Beauvoir has said that one of the chief obstacles in the struggle for female emancipation was that women lacked a nucleus around which to group: "(t)hey have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the proletariat".<sup>45</sup> For many colonial women writers, the very act of writing was a political one which helped to instil a sense of cohesion. At the same time, it was a means of mirroring the self and the colony which not only assisted in

---

<sup>42</sup>Levine, Philippa: *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Roles and Public Commitment*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>Organizations arising directly out of the Langham Place Circle are: the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (1859) and an associated law-copying office, *The English Woman's Journal* (1858), the Victoria Printing Press (1861), and the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society (1862). Prime movers in the Langham Place Circle include the reformer Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), editor of *The English Woman's Journal* Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925), author and art critic Anna Brownell Jameson (1794-1860), poet Adelaide Proctor (pseud. 'Mary Berwick', 1825-1864), and reformer Maria Rye (1829-1903).

<sup>44</sup>Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton (1808-1877) Her prolonged campaign to obtain custody of her children, following an acrimonious separation from her husband, influenced the introduction of the Infant Custody Bill (1839). Despite her problems, she states: "The wild and stupid theories advanced by a few women, of 'equal rights' and 'equal intelligence' are not the opinions of their sex. I, for one, (I, with millions more), believe in the natural superiority of man, as I do in the existence of a God". (Introduction to *Caroline Norton's Defense: English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century*, reprinted Academy Press, Chicago, 1982, p. 165; first published 1854)

<sup>45</sup>de Beauvoir, 1988, p. 19.

establishing a new sense of identity but also relayed the female viewpoint to the metropolis. Four key areas of feminist counter-discourse can be traced in the works examined: the subversion of the patriarchal discourse of gender and its tropes, the forging of new female identities predicated upon a sense of belonging to their new countries, the repudiation of nineteenth-century imperialist historicism, and the interrogation of racial discourse and subjection of 'native' peoples.

In order to encompass the scope and diversity of colonial women's writing, each chapter addresses a different aspect in the evolution of the corpus. Chapter One, *The Gendered Frame*, contextualizes colonial women's writing against the background of nineteenth-century gender discourses in Britain and argues that women were culturally constructed, or framed, through the male gaze and masculinist rhetoric. It looks firstly at the trope of female sexual transgression as it is figured through the presence of looking-glass iconography in some paintings by Pre-Raphaelite painters. It then examines the devolution of this trope as it feeds in to the formulation of female stereotypes, thereby serving to regulate women's lives at many level, but particularly through the effective censorship of female reading and writing and through the promotion of female emigration. Chapter Two, *Writing Home: Dramas of Exile*, discusses two early works by colonial women writers which counter the stereotypical image of the emigrant female. Chapter Three, *Writes of Passage*, contends that the development of the colonial feminist *Bildungsroman* was a pivotal element in the evolution of colonial women's literature. It argues that over time, colonial women writers turn from introspective preoccupation with the acculturation of women, emblemized by the looking-glass, to look outwards in order to establish female national identity in conjunction with a local, female, literary voice. Chapter Four, 'History, real solemn history ...', examines historical discourse as a particular form of patriarchal mirroring and contends that, even before the close of the nineteenth century, colonial women writers engage in what is now considered to be feminist practice by repudiating imperial history and by rewriting accounts of infamous events. Finally, Chapter Five, *Shadow Sisters*, considers the colonial feminists' espousal of minority rights as a female mode of mirroring predicated upon a sense of international sisterhood, which counters the 'imperial feminism' propagated by British-based feminists.

### The Looking-Glass of Empire

Looking-glasses, or mirrors, have long held a fascination for mankind. For centuries, writers and artists have used catoptric encounters to symbolize significant moments, with the mirror serving as a magical device capable of revealing or distorting truths to the beholder.<sup>46</sup> The metaphor of the mirror foregrounds similarities or mismatches between the reflected image and actuality, permitting the writer to explore a range of issues including the construction of gender, ideological disjunctions, or even the human psyche itself. However, discourse and literature can also be seen as forms of mirroring in which society is reflected. According to the South African writer, Nadine Gordimer, the writer functions as a 'Metamir', or "metaphysical mirror" of society, able to distinguish and relay to her or his readership a view of the human condition which is not normally immediately apparent:

The writer is that person who stands before you.  
What he or she finds in the individual is not a working model to be dragged off and wired up to a book but a series of intimations the individual does not present to the ordinary mirror of the world.<sup>47</sup>

Virginia Woolf famously likens women to mirrors in *A Room of One's Own*, claiming that patriarchy has flourished because women serve to magnify male power, reflecting it back to men and thereby augmenting male hegemony: "women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size."<sup>48</sup> However, in the same book she shows how mirroring can function in reverse:

there is a spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head which one can never see for oneself. It is one of the good offices that sex can discharge for sex - to describe that spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head.<sup>49</sup>

In a similar way, Janet Frame's poem, 'The Pocket Mirror', claims that "a detached instrument like a mirror" is necessary to "undeceive the sight"; indeed by

---

<sup>46</sup>Some well-known examples of the literary use of mirror symbology are given in Chapter One of this thesis.

<sup>47</sup>Gordimer, Nadine: *Writing and Being*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1996, p. 5. For the symbolic 'Metamir', or "metaphysical mirror [which] does not obey the law of optics but reproduces your image as it is seen by the person who stands before you", Gordimer draws upon Primo Levi's short story, 'The Mirror Maker', in *The Mirror Maker* (translated by Raymond Rosenthal), Little, Brown & Co., London, 1997, p. 58; first published by Editrice La Stampa, Turin, 1986.

<sup>48</sup>Woolf, Virginia: *A Room of One's Own*, in ed. Michèle Barrett: *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1993, p. 29; hereafter given as Woolf, *A.R.O.O.*, first published by Hogarth Press, London, 1929.

<sup>49</sup>Woolf, *A.R.O.O.*, p. 62.

foregrounding gender, her title suggests that undeceiving the sight is a matter for women. Nancy L. Paxton sees the colonial world itself as a hall of mirrors in which the hegemonic discourses of gender, class, and race reflected out from the metropolis become distorted:

women's experience of power and agency was limited by a colonial world that represented itself as a hall of mirrors that magnified gender, class, and racial differences in concert with other ideologies defining market economics, political power, and national identity.<sup>50</sup>

This thesis argues that in seeking to correct the distortions they perceived, the colonial women writers examined reversed the male gaze and functioned collectively as a "detached instrument", or looking-glass, a 'Metamir' describing "that spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head", in turn reflecting back to the metropolis a series of intimations not normally presented to the world.

§§§

---

<sup>50</sup>Paxton, Nancy L.: 'Disembodied Subjects: English Women's Autobiography under the Raj', in (eds.) Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson: *De/colonizing the Subject: the politics of gender in women's autobiography*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 406.

## Chapter One

### The Gendered Frame

I dreamt that I was looking in a glass when a horrible face - the face of an animal - suddenly showed over my shoulder. I cannot be sure if this was a dream, or if it happened. Was I looking in the glass one day when something in the background moved, and seemed to me alive? I cannot be sure. But I have always remembered the other face in the glass, whether it was a dream or a fact, and that it frightened me.<sup>1</sup>

§§§

In her memoir, 'A Sketch of the Past', Virginia Woolf infers that what she calls her "looking-glass shame" originates from an incident, described in the epigraph above, when an animal's face seemed to appear over her shoulder as she glanced in a mirror. Her sense of shame at looking at herself in the mirror is, she indicates, directly related to the impulse to conform to societal constructions of femininity and her rejection of them. She confides that, even in adulthood, she feels "shy, self-conscious, uncomfortable" when confronted by situations which foreground femininity, and goes on to acknowledge, "I must have been ashamed or afraid of my own body".<sup>2</sup> The beast lurking in the mirror can therefore be understood as a manifestation of patriarchy itself, ubiquitous in its surveillance of womankind and insistent upon framing women as gendered objects, omnipresent even at catoptric moments when woman attempts to divine the essence of the female self.

Gerda Lerner concludes that patriarchy derives power from its pre-emptive appropriation of the right to define, and from its ability to manipulate and maintain control of the discourses which educate: "(m)ale hegemony over the symbol system took two forms: educational deprivation of women and male monopoly on definition".<sup>3</sup> Thus, Woolf's experience is helpful in gaining an understanding of male hegemony in the Victorian era, as it not only draws attention to the ubiquitous focus of the male gaze on the female form, and its intensity, but it also hints at the way that hegemonic discourse functioned as a mirror which defined women by reflecting versions of femininity with which they were expected to comply and conform, as well as cautionary versions which they were constrained to eschew. It is this symbiosis

---

<sup>1</sup>Woolf, Virginia: 'A Sketch of the Past', in (ed.) Jeanne Schulkind: *Moments of Being*, Grafton/HarperCollins, London, 1989, p. 78; hereafter given as Woolf, 'Sketch'.

<sup>2</sup>Woolf, 'Sketch', in Schulkind, 1989, pp. 76 & 77.

<sup>3</sup>Lerner, Gerda: *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, p. 219.



between the male gaze and the tropology deployed by Victorian patriarchal discourse to define, acculturate, and subject women which I intend to discuss in this chapter in order to expose the way in which patriarchal power was wielded, and to contextualize the colonial feminist response.

By drawing on nineteenth-century media, I argue that male anxiety to retain ascendancy resulted in the propagation of numerous, intersecting discourses of gender, centring on a multitude of iconic female figures which were based primarily on the two antithetical, 'core' representations of Victorian womanhood, the Angel in the House/Madonna, or the Whore/Magdalene. As the nineteenth-century progressed, and feminism grew more forceful, the dynamic changed; masculinist discourse became increasingly preoccupied with controlling women through the definition and redefinition of the nature of womanhood; as a result, multiple female stereotypes, such as the indigent woman, the redundant woman, the needlewoman, the governess, and the woman reader were generated in addition, and became absorbed in turn into the hegemonic symbolic system. Yet each was double-edged, being predicated simultaneously both on the inherent 'goodness' vested in the Angel stereotype, and on the latent 'badness' projected in, and by, the Whore, or sexually transgressive woman. Indeed, the latter state remained omnipresent as a means through which male control was exerted over female behaviour, and was continually foregrounded in hegemonic discourse as a cautionary state of abjection into which respectable womanhood might fall.

The chapter is divided into three sections, each concerned with a different aspect of patriarchal discourse and the exertion of male control through the gendered framing of women. The first section focuses on the way in which hegemonic discourse constructed the figure of the sexually transgressive woman as a means of retaining male ascendancy. My argument centres initially on paintings in which the looking-glass, or mirror, recurs as an icon signifying female sexual awareness and female allure within the male symbolic system; this iconography becomes significant in subsequent chapters of this thesis when I examine the colonial women writers' exploration of gender as a social construct through their appropriation of looking-glass imagery. In the second section, I move on to show how the figure of the sexually transgressive female was deployed in social debate about iconic figures such as the indigent woman and the

redundant woman, and contributed directly to a discourse of emigration resulting in the production of the figure of the emigrant female and the commodification of women in an imperial setting. In the final section, I examine the way in which the figure of the sexually transgressive woman was also used to exert control over female authorship and female readership, and to define the production of literature, and hence hegemonic discourse itself, as male.

This discursive background is crucial to my thesis because the issues surrounding the emergence of feminism and of feminist literature were as significant in the colonies as in Britain itself. British cultural norms prevailed across the empire, and many colonial women writers were, therefore, responding to the cultural hegemony of the metropolis and to various strands of a patriarchal discourse which constructed woman as other. Over the passage of time, they became familiar with the work of other colonial feminists and were aware of contributing to a counter-discourse on an international scale. In the context of the history of women's writing and the literary tradition traced by Elaine Showalter, the phallogocentric nature of hegemonic discourse at the metropolis is also relevant because most colonial women writers found it necessary to seek publication in Britain, and to cultivate British as well as colonial readerships, in the absence of publishing opportunities overseas. Their writing was a critical political act through which they sought to seize the power of self-definition in order to re-image the white woman in the colonies, and the subversion of masculinist discourse and of the male symbolic system generated at the metropolitan centre was an essential part of the colonial feminist project.

### **'Mirror! Mirror!': Patriarchal discourse, paintings, and the sexually transgressive woman**

...I got into the habit of looking at my face in the glass. But I only did this if I was sure that I was alone. I was ashamed of it. A strong feeling of guilt seemed naturally attached to it. ...the looking-glass shame has lasted all my life.<sup>4</sup>

§§§

The symbolism which comes to feature prominently in some novels by colonial women writers, the looking-glass imaged in association with woman, has long been used as a trope in art and literature, but it made frequent significant appearances in the nineteenth

---

<sup>4</sup>Woolf, 'Sketch', in Schulkind, 1989, p. 76.

century. One well-known example of the way in which the mythology of woman's relationship with the mirror has become engrained within the Occidental Ur-consciousness, the Snow White fairy story, underlines the fact that almost invariably the connection between woman and mirror spells female narcissism and an awareness of the power of female allure. As J.B. Bullen remarks, "The attraction of the narcissistic female was nothing new in the nineteenth century, and the image of the woman in the mirror was, of course, a proverbial emblem of female vanity. But she seems to have enjoyed a particular vogue in this period". He goes on to explore the significance of Hetty Sorrel's relationship with her looking-glass in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), of Bathsheba Everdene's with hers in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), and, citing Bram Dijkstra, maintains, "'There is scarcely a figure painter [of the latter part of the nineteenth century] who did not undertake to paint 'woman before the mirror'".<sup>5</sup>

In the work of one highly prolific Victorian group, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood who met from 1848, representations of women juxtaposed to mirrors abound, but especially in the paintings and poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. J. Hillis Miller argues that "the secret" of Rossetti's ambiguous mirror imagery is that, "All Rossetti's work is haunted by an experience of devastating loss".<sup>6</sup> Yet as Bullen points out "human loss cannot exist in isolation", and his reading of Rossetti's preoccupation with women and mirrors is that the mirror signifies simultaneously female sexual power, the threat of female withdrawal, and male lack or loss:

In Rossetti's work generally loss of self-identity and desire for the female are often constructed in terms of images in mirrors.  
...the female acts as a threat to the self both through rejection and acceptance, while

---

<sup>5</sup>Bullen, J. B.: *The Pre-Raphaelites: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 139 & f.n. 38 p. 139; Dijkstra, Bram: *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in the Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1986, p. 139. Over the ages, mirror symbology has been popular in literature. Notable examples include: Book 10 of Plato's *The Republic*, the story of Narcissus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Eve's admiration of herself in Book 4 of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. (Hillis Miller, J.: 'The Mirror's Secret: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Double Work of Art', in *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Winter 1991, p. 342). Jonathan Miller's exhibition at the National Gallery, London, *Mirror Image: Jonathan Miller on Reflection* (1998), on the use of the reflective surface in paintings, featured many of women and their looking-glasses. Mirror mystique abounds in mythology and folklore, often suggesting a dangerous or seductive female *alter ego*: the Medusa, fatal to behold directly, can be safely viewed in a mirror; the superstition associating broken mirrors with seven years of bad luck derives from the belief that mirrors reflect the shadow soul; in 'The Tale of Zayn al-Asnam' in the *Arabian Nights*, the mirror reflects a woman's state of virtue rather than her appearance. (ed Jones, Alison: *Dictionary of World Folklore*, Larousse, Edinburgh, 1995, pp. 304-5)

<sup>6</sup>Hillis Miller, 1991, p. 336.

male need, as reflected in the female, oscillates between two states, desire and fear. ...Predicated upon a highly precarious sense of the self, the image is a memorial to loss, while at the same time it embodies the possibility of dangerous empowerment; the female may or may not be the possessor of the phallus, which may, or may not, be there. In order to express and explore this dilemma, Rossetti persistently employs the literal or figurative mirror or glass. The glass can reflect back the image of the self, or it can show the other in the self; it can act as a device which positively reflects back male desire, or it can act as a means of satisfying self-enclosed female narcissism.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst Bullen's interpretation does acknowledge both male desire and male anxiety these are clearly linked to the sense of lack or loss identified by Hillis Miller, and neither of these two critiques of Rossetti's representations of women and mirrors considers the full implication of the scopophilic gaze, or the controlling relationship between male painter and female subject in terms of what Laura Mulvey has dubbed "Man as Bearer of the Look" and the "Woman as Image".<sup>8</sup>

By approaching Rossetti's work and other nineteenth-century representations of women and mirrors through Mulvey's seminal analysis of scopophilia and the use of the female body in narrative cinema, I intend to highlight the male exploitation of the female figure within the hegemonic semiotic system as a means of maintaining patriarchal ascendancy. This does not necessarily entail a *conscious* movement to manipulate on the part of male agents such as painters and writers; but, just as Mulvey argues that "the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form", it is my contention that the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured other media representations of woman.<sup>9</sup> The central point emphasized by Mulvey is that the structuring of the cinematic gaze plays on what she calls "voyeuristic phantasy", objectifying women whose appearance is "coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*".<sup>10</sup> She concludes by drawing attention to the importance of three different gazes associated with cinematography: "that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion".<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Bullen, 1998, pp. 124 & 125.

<sup>8</sup>Mulvey, Laura: 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in (ed.) Penley, Constance: *Feminism and Film Theory*, Routledge London, 1988, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup>Mulvey, 1988, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup>Mulvey, 1988, pp. 60 & 62.

<sup>11</sup>Mulvey, 1988, p. 68.

Certain media representations of women in association with mirrors, such as Rossetti's paintings, can also be considered in terms of the scopophilic gaze, or "voyeuristic phantasy", identified by Mulvey. The gaze of the male artist can be substituted for that of the camera, the spectator replaces the cinema audience, and the woman's self-awareness before the mirror replicates, in more senses than one, the gaze of actors at one another, so that the mirror itself functions iconographically to suggest a doubling or otherness in the woman viewed: she is displayed and coded as erotic by her pose, clothing and surroundings, but the presence of the mirror stresses her sexual self-awareness and, consequently, connotes her sexual availability. As a result, the pleasure for the artist and male viewer can be seen as not only stemming from the "voyeuristic phantasy" afforded by such paintings, but also from the fact that the female subjects of such paintings are depicted as traducing the Victorian codes of femininity by manifesting "transgressive female desire".<sup>12</sup>

At this juncture, it is important to point out that the implicit commodification of women as sexual objects in some paintings by male artists also indicates the absorption of the sexually transgressive female subject into patriarchal discourse as a sign. Mulvey stresses that, in a filmic context, "Woman ...[is] bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning not maker of meaning".<sup>13</sup> Arguably, in paintings of women and of women as doubly fixed objects being imaged and imaging themselves in mirrors, woman is even more the static and silent bearer of man's meaning than she is in film. The hegemonic insistence on the codification of women as either Angel or Whore entails that the sexuality projected upon the woman subject in such paintings also foregrounds her culpability by denoting her as complicit through her narcissistic and self-aware association with the mirror. As a result, this particular genre of 'woman before the mirror' paintings almost invariably suggests the female fall from grace by projecting sexual guilt upon the female, a move which also serves to absolve the male viewer, and which recalls Gilbert and Gubar's phrase, "the distorting mirrors of patriarchy".<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>Bullen, 1998, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup>Mulvey, 1988, p. 58.

<sup>14</sup>Gilbert, Sandra M., & Susan Gubar: *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1979, p. 284.

The iconographic use of the mirror to connote transgressive female desire is evident in Rossetti's paintings, *Fazio's Mistress* (1863), and *Lady Lilith* (1864), and in William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) and his illustrations for 'The Lady of Shalott'. *Fazio's Mistress* bears many resemblances to an earlier painting by Rossetti, *Bocca baciata* (1859), a work whose title draws on Boccaccio's tale of the much-kissed mouth (figs. 1.1 and 1.2).<sup>15</sup> In both paintings the physical attributes of the model bespeak her sexuality and wantonness: her luxuriant hair flows loose, she is both full-throated and full-lipped; in addition, her loose garments and state of deshabelle not only allude to the delights of the bedchamber, but also suggest a loosening of morals, whilst her jewellery connotes her value to her male provider in the sexual market place.<sup>16</sup> An apple stands beside the model in *Bocca baciata*, symbolizing Eve's temptation and subsequent fall. As Jan Marsh remarks, such appurtenances "signal[s] an implicit recognition of the female sexuality that well-brought-up women were not supposed to feel; conventional wisdom taught that, for ladies, sex was a duty rather than a pleasure".<sup>17</sup>

The similarities between this group of Rossetti's paintings result in the importation of the self-same sexual symbolism to *Fazio's Mistress* and *Lady Lilith*, charging the mirror with the temptations of the flesh (fig. 1.3). Indeed, just as each model in these two paintings appears abstracted and bound up with her toilette, so the female figure in *Lady Lilith* also appears to be self-absorbed in preparing herself for her role as succubus, a factor which, as Bullen notes, brings Lilith into the Victorian boudoir, and has "as potent an influence over the nineteenth-century male mind as she was over the ancient male mind".<sup>18</sup> Rossetti himself confirms, in a letter about his painting of Lilith, the dangerous magnetism he intended her to impart; he agrees that Lilith gazes at

<sup>15</sup>Rossetti wrote on the reverse of the painting, "*Bocca baciata non perda ventura, anzi rinova come fa luna*". (A kissed mouth doesn't lose its freshness, for like the moon it always renews itself.) The tale centres on male lust and female sexual experience: it tells of a woman, destined for marriage, who through misadventure is shipwrecked and kidnapped, and becomes the mistress of many men before finally marrying her intended who, in his ignorance, greets her as a virgin bride. (Bullen, 1998, pp. 89-90)

<sup>16</sup>Citing Elizabeth Gitter, Bullen notes: "The more abundant the hair, the more potent the sexual invitation implied in its display ...luxuriance of the hair is an index of vigorous sexuality, even of wantonness". (Bullen, 1998, p. 131; Gitter, Elizabeth: 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination', in *PMLA*, 99, 1984, p. 938) The full red lips of models also denote sexuality: they "function as a displaced sign of female sexuality, her genitals". (Pollock, Griselda: 'Woman as sign: psychoanalytic readings', in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art*, Routledge, 1988, pp. 128)

<sup>17</sup>Marsh, Jan: *Pre-Raphaelite Women: Images of Femininity in Pre-Raphaelite Art*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1995, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup>Bullen, 1998, p. 136.

herself "with that complete self-absorption by whose fascination such natures draw others within their circle", and that "the most essential meaning" of the companion sonnet, 'Body's Beauty', is "the perilous principle in the world being female from the first".<sup>19</sup>

As J. Hillis Miller points out, Rossetti's mirrorings appear "alogical", but they employ a deep symbology to portray female sexuality:

In 'Lady Lilith' the mirroring of a boudoir which turns out to be an abyssal wood of storm-tossed branches also mirrors the reflection of Lilith in her hand-held mirror. Though the back of that mirror is turned toward the spectator, the image in the mirror on the wall tells him what chasm is no doubt pictured there behind the screen of reflected hair. This chasm is imaged over and over throughout Rossetti's work by way of displaced figures in the 'outside' framed in a window or in a mirror.<sup>20</sup>

The abyssal wood and the chasm depicted in *Lady Lilith*, are also suggested by the title of Rossetti's, 'The Orchard Pit', a poem which tells of female sexual transgression and its dangers to men. The antepenultimate verse of this tells of a siren-like female figure, luring men to their fate: "...and her hair/Crosses my lips and draws my burning breath;/Her song spreads golden wings upon the air;/Life's eyes are gleaming from her forehead fair,/And from her breasts the ravishing eyes of Death".<sup>21</sup> The poem parallels the symbology in the paintings by projecting masculine fears about female sexuality in such a way that the female is made accountable for male lust, for the male descent into carnality, and even for the male observer and speaker's scopophilic imaging of the female body. Whilst woman's beckoning eyes indicate life, man is ensnared by that potent symbol of the deceptive dangers of female allure in the Rossetti iconography, her hair; even her breasts spell death, so that the female depicted is at one and the same time the essence of femaleness, seductress, the death-dealing Orchard Pit, and the chaotic "maelstrom's cup" into which man is drawn to spiral downwards towards his fate by the gravitational force of subversive female sensuality.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup>D.G. Rossetti to his friend, Dr. Hake; letter dated 1870, in Doughty, O. & J.R. Wahl: *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Letters, Vol. II*, Oxford, 1965, p. 850, cited in Allen, Virginia M.: "One Strangling Golden Hair": Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*, in *The Art Bulletin*, June 1984, Vol. LXVI, no. 2, p. 286. Rossetti's portrayal of Lilith evidences his own "consuming interest" in women's hair verging on a fetish and male anxiety at female disruptiveness; Lilith's hair is "a symbol of the destructive power possessed by the femme fatale ... born of confrontation with the Women's Emancipation Movement and the controversy over family planning in the 1860s". (Allen, 1984, pp. 288 & 286)

<sup>20</sup>Hillis Miller, 1991, p. 336.

<sup>21</sup>Rossetti, Dante Gabriel: 'The Orchard Pit', in (ed.) William M. Rossetti: *The Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Ellis, London, 1912, p. 708.

<sup>22</sup>The final verse of 'The Orchard Pit' runs:

Continued on next page...

Holman Hunt's paintings also deploy the mirror to suggest female sexual transgression, but in ways which are subtly different to Rossetti's. Hunt's moralistic painting, *The Awakening Conscience* (fig. 1.4), codes the woman as victim even although the domestic interior, her long, partially-restrained hair, and the absence of a wedding ring all indicate that she is a kept mistress. The sudden realization of her plight is illustrated through her facial expression and by her pose as she starts away from her erstwhile lover's knee; the clock on the piano showing just before midday suggests that decision time looms. The bird beneath the table not only denotes her impulse to flight, but also signals that she is just as much the prey and the plaything of the man as it is of the nearby cat. Likewise, her state of entrapment is also duplicated in and by the mirror behind her; although it captures her rear view, it also images the tantalizing means of escape, the wide-open window; yet the window is itself ornately framed like a mirror, indicating the impossibility of release after the symbolic fall into sin, since the woman appears to be trapped within an eternal series of mirrors. Just as the bird's demise seems assured, so does her death, actual or social.

Hunt also employs a series of frames to construct woman as culpable of sexual transgression in his representations of the Lady of Shalott, but these result in privileging male authority and in portraying woman as the architect of her own downfall. The chivalric theme of Tennyson's poem, *The Lady of Shalott*, first published in 1832, inspired many Pre-Raphaelite painters to illustrate the plight of the imprisoned maiden, forbidden to experience or even observe the world directly but doomed to watch and weave into her tapestry the lives of others which she can only see at a remove through reflections in a strategically-placed mirror.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, it is the arrival of a potential suitor, Lancelot, in her limited field of vision which leads her to transgress; she leaves her loom, abandoning her mirror-view to look out of the window and then the mirror cracks, thereby activating the curse which leads to her death. Holman

---

<sup>22</sup>Continued from previous page...

"My love I call her, and she loves me well:  
But I love her as in the maelstrom's cup  
The whirled stone loves the leaf inseparable  
That clings to it round all the circling swell,  
And that the same last eddy swallows up". (Rossetti, 1912, p. 708)

<sup>23</sup>There are "Several dozen . . . depictions of the Lady of Shalott"; Jan Marsh lists paintings and drawings of the subject by Pre-Raphaelite painters, their contemporaries, and successors, including *Lady of Shalott* (1853) by Elizabeth Siddal, John Everett Millais' painting of 1854, William Maw Egley's version of 1858; and three separate examples by J.W. Waterhouse (1888, 1894 and 1915). (Marsh, 1987, p. 150)



Hunt's 1857 drawing of the subject depicts the moment after she has left the loom (fig. 1.5). Facing the viewer is the mirror, in which the reflection of Lancelot is doubly framed, by the mirror itself and by the Gothic arches of window which stand behind the implied, but invisible, viewer; the Lady, entangled in skeins of yarn, stands within the frame of her loom and is semi-averted both from the viewer and from the window, but has clearly turned away from the mirror and her work; tellingly, her hair is flying up in magnificent disarray to frame her head, indicating sexual chaos.

Jan Marsh records that Holman Hunt "analysed the text [*of Tennyson's poem*] as a moral fable illustrating 'the failure of a human soul towards its accepted responsibility'".<sup>24</sup> However, a feminist interpretation of the Lady of Shalott myth, and of the drawing in conjunction with Holman Hunt's words, indicates a patriarchal discourse which sees the "accepted responsibility" of women to be to cleave to female confinement, isolation, and inexperience of real life, and to accept female thralldom to male hegemony. A later painting by Holman Hunt on the same subject, on which he worked over a period of time from 1886 to 1905, is very similar to the 1857 drawing, except for a few significant details (fig. 1.6). Birds can be seen flying loose in the room, and their free flight contrasts with the Lady's ensnarement within the threads of her own disobedience. Secondly, the use of colour lends a tonal quality which is absent from the drawing, so that Hunt's handling of colour, light, and shade accentuates the differences between the Lady's confinement and the knight's freedom. Finally, the mirror frame is doubled; within the left-hand frame stands the mirror itself, showing Lancelot in the arched window, whilst the right-hand frame appears to contain a painting showing the image of a seated male figure, whose crown, orb, and stylized halo suggest him to be God the Father, the supreme representative of male authority. The hegemonic subtext is unmistakable: not only must women obey the moral imperatives of society, but that society is patriarchal. Indeed, the ambiguous use of the frame to link the reflective surface of the mirror and the putative painting not only implies male supremacy, but because the male figure might be a mirrored image it also suggests the enduring, ever-present nature of male domination so that woman's

---

<sup>24</sup>Holman Hunt, W.: *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Vol. II*, 1905, p. 401, cited in Marsh, 1987, p. 150.

behaviour is seen as being controlled by the ubiquitous surveillance and vigilance of man.<sup>25</sup>

The figure of the sexually transgressive woman is also mirrored in a vein of masculinist discourse which became the focus of early feminist campaigns, namely the proposed extension of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864 and 1866. As Judith Walkowitz points out, these Acts were "consistent with a set of attitudes and 'habits of mind' towards women, sexuality, and class that permeated official Victorian culture".<sup>26</sup> In the context of my thesis, because the Acts institutionalized the surveillance and categorization of many women in Britain and across the empire, irrespective of race and class, and because the patriarchal values they fed upon contributed, ultimately, to the discourse of female emigration through the fear of uncontrolled female sexuality, they require to be examined as another manifestation of the gendered framing women through the male gaze.

First introduced in 1864, and extended in 1866 and 1869, the Acts endorsed a discourse promulgating the belief that women remained always inherently dangerous and unstable as potentially impure vessels, liable to pollute society, on the one hand, and to seize sexual control and financial independence, on the other. However, this was a discourse fraught with contradictions which was born of the desire to augment and retain patriarchal power, both in a domestic and in an imperial setting. Partially motivated by imperial aspirations and the perceived need to protect the empire by improving the health of the British armed forces, due to concerns about British casualties at Crimea and following the Indian 'Mutiny' of 1857, the Acts were designed to eradicate venereal disease, which was rife amongst military and naval personnel, and

---

<sup>25</sup>Not all Pre-Raphaelite representations of the Lady of Shalott endorse the patriarchal ideology manifested in Tennyson's poem and Holman Hunt's paintings. A drawing, also entitled *The Lady of Shalott* (1853), by a female member of the group, Elizabeth Siddal, resists the construction of woman as victim of her own sexual transgression. Whereas Holman Hunt focuses on the consequences of female disobedience, Siddal shows the Lady at the moment of her look. The outdoor world of the knight, and of men, which is seen in the mirror, is also clearly visible through the window over the Lady's shoulder, an opposition foregrounding the interiorized life of the Lady, and thus of all women. The Lady herself is represented as devout and pure: her clothing is austere, her hair chastely arranged, and a crucifix stands before the window. As 'D.C.' points out, "She is not offered as a victim or spectacle for the masculine gaze, nor does she attain visibility within its relays of power". ('D.C.': 'The Lady of Shalott', in *The Pre-Raphaelites*, The Tate Gallery/Penguin, London, 1984, pp. 266-7)

<sup>26</sup>Walkowitz, Judith: *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, class and the state*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1980, p. 70.

provided for the control of prostitution in 'subjected districts' surrounding ports and garrisons in Britain.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the Cantonments Act (1864) and the Indian Contagious Diseases Act (1868) were enacted to control prostitution in India, with similar measures being taken elsewhere in the empire.<sup>28</sup> In Britain, the Acts permitted plain clothes policemen to mount close surveillance with the aim of identifying female prostitutes, and to deliver them into the hands of the medical profession for periodic examination on a fortnightly basis. Women found to be suffering from venereal disease would be confined within designated lock hospitals for up to nine months, in order to receive physical medical care and moral rehabilitation.<sup>29</sup>

The discourse promoting the Contagious Diseases Acts and the regulation of prostitution was, therefore, paradoxical; it was fuelled by a recognition that there was a need for a sex industry to supply the physical needs of men, thought to be quite different from those of women; however, at the same time, there abounded a fear, not just of physical but also of moral contagion, because prostitutes were seen as social pollutants, as one of the leading proponents of the Acts, the venereologist William Acton, makes apparent:

It is clear, then, that though we may call these women outcasts and pariahs, they have a powerful influence for evil on all ranks of the community. The moral injury inflicted on society by prostitution is incalculable; the physical injury is at least as great. [*In London*] ...we have among us more than 1500 [*diseased prostitutes*] ...human beings daily engaged in the occupation of spreading abroad a loathsome poison, the effects of which are not even confined to the partakers of their sin, but are too often transmitted to his issue, and bear their fruits in tottering limbs and tainted blood.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>From 1823 venereal disease was on the increase: "By 1864, one out of three sick cases in the army were venereal in origin, whereas admissions into hospitals for gonorrhoea and syphilis reached 290.7 per 1,000 of total troop strength. ...in 1862, one out of eleven hospital patients was suffering from venereal disease, and venereal patients constituted 125 admissions per 1,000 troops". The only civilian statistics available give death rates due to syphilis; concern centred on the hereditary effects of syphilis and resultant infant mortality. (Walkowitz, 1980, pp. 48-9)

<sup>28</sup>The imperial feminist involvement on behalf of Indian women is discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis. "Prostitutes were examined regularly for venereal disease, typically in lock hospitals ...in India, Hong Kong, Fiji, Gibraltar, and the Straits Settlements." (Burton, Antoinette: *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1994, p. 130) The 1866 extension of the Contagious Diseases Acts in Britain was based on the system of regulation implemented in Malta. (Walkowitz, 1980, pp. 78 & 106)

<sup>29</sup>The term 'lock hospital' derives "from the French word, *loques*, signifying rags, bandages, lints". (Acton, William: *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects, in London and Other Large Cities and Garrison Towns; with Proposals for the Control and Prevention of Its Attendant Evils*, Frank Cass, London, 1972, p. 78; reprint of John Churchill & Sons, London, 1870, revised ed., first pub. 1857)

<sup>30</sup>Acton, 1972, pp. 72-3.

The moral responsibility is thus transferred to woman, but as she is also blamed for physically infecting man and for enfeebling "*his* issue", she threatens succeeding generations of Britons and even the health and well-being of the country and empire. According to Acton's regulationist ideology, whereas the male sex drive necessitates the services of prostitutes because of man's "natural instinct" and because of the "effective 'celibacy'" occasioned by late marriage for economic or other reasons, such as the marriage restrictions imposed on soldiery, female prostitution is caused by "the vice of women", their "(n)atural sinfulness", and by "seduction, poverty, *idleness, love of dress, love of pleasure*, evil training and associations, and evil habits".<sup>31</sup> Although she inhabits a different social milieu, in hegemonic discourse the figure of the female prostitute is linked directly to the figure of the kept woman in Rossetti's paintings: she is projected as a commodified and sexually transgressive woman, but at the same time she is shown to be exploiting men to gratify her own vanity and sexual self-awareness.

The Contagious Diseases Acts are considered an important milestone in hegemonic discourse, in Britain and across the empire, not only because they enabled and validated the surveillance, confinement, and enforced treatment of females, but also because they encouraged the discriminatory labelling and categorization of women. As most women in subjected districts were considered to be under suspicion, and because women from all sections of society were involved in the campaigns for their repeal, the Acts served to place femininity, and its definitions, under the scrutiny of the panoptical male gaze, thereby further endorsing constructions of 'good' and 'bad' womanhood. The perceived constancy of this gaze, validated as it was by the male-dominated institutions of the social infrastructure, namely the civilian police, the legislature, the military, and the newly-professionalized medical meritocracy, thus served as a potent restraint on female behaviour.

Not only did the Contagious Diseases Acts place female behaviour throughout the empire under critical scrutiny, but also the innermost reaches of the female body itself were subjected to the male gaze, literal or otherwise, through the use of the speculum to

<sup>31</sup>The marriage of enlisted men was strongly discouraged as it was thought essential to have a mobile fighting force. (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 74) Acton gives statistics on those soldiers permitted to marry, and maintains that, "93 out of every 100 soldiers are of necessity unmarried men ... in the most part in the prime of life, in vigorous health, and exposed to circumstances peculiarly calculated to develop animal instincts". (Acton, 1972, pp. 165, 176 & 168)

diagnose venereal disease and to categorize and inscribe women as pure or impure. Although the speculum had been available to doctors for some time, its use in the regulation of prostitution and venereal disease in France during the 1830s and 1840s led to its promotion in Britain for the same purpose, but subsequent public debate about its usage also drew strength from the fact that medical opinion was divided about its efficacy as a diagnostic tool.<sup>32</sup> According to Walkowitz, "speculum examination was perceived by patients and many doctors (at least in the 1850s) as a voyeuristic and degrading act".<sup>33</sup> One learned opponent of its use, Robert Lee, denounced it with the caustic remarks, "No matter what the complaint, the *fons et origio mali*, is declared to be the uterus." Promptly, ... "the speculum is brought into play, startling are the revelations made by its glittering wall".<sup>34</sup> The speculum, therefore, became one of the foci of hegemonic discourse, where it came to symbolize female transgression. As Bullen remarks, it "became the medical mirror reflecting the seat of corruption in women".<sup>35</sup> Despite the repealers' eventual success in 1886, the length of time that the Acts remained extant, and the vociferous and protracted nature of the public debate at home and in India, resulted in the speculum, like the Pre-Raphaelite mirrorings, serving to reflect back to society images of femininity which were not only tainted, but which were insistent upon woman's sexual aberrance.<sup>36</sup>

Walkowitz suggests that the Acts were introduced in the 1860s because of "concern over prostitution as a dangerous form of sexual activity", and because of "a new enthusiasm for state intervention into the lives of the unrespectable poor" or "social

---

<sup>32</sup>Both men and women opposed the Acts. The National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the ladies' branch, the LNA, led by Josephine Butler, were formed in 1869. Support came from the middle and working classes, bolstered by a labour aristocracy, newly-enfranchised under the 1867 Reform Act which stimulated political activism and feminist awareness. (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 91) The repeal campaign succeeded because campaigners forced public debate; many Victorians found it shocking to hear "middle-class women talking about prostitution and the sexual violations of women". (Caine, Barbara: *English Feminism: 1780-1980*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 123)

<sup>33</sup>Walkowitz, 1980, p. 57.

<sup>34</sup>A Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons: *The Speculum: its Moral Tendencies*, London, 1857, pp. 6-7 (cited in Bullen, 1998, p. 146)

<sup>35</sup>Bullen, 1998, p. 146.

<sup>36</sup>The speculum is a metaphor for feminist discourse in Luce Irigaray's book, *Speculum de l'autre femme* (Minuit, Paris, 1974; *Speculum of the other Woman*, transl. Gillian C. Gill, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985). "The title ... refers to the mirror used by doctors for examining the internal cavities of the body. Playing on the idea of the mirror, she points out that Lacan's mirror can only see women's bodies as lacking, as a hole; to see what is specific to women, he would have needed a mirror that could look inside. The mirror ... is the mirror of theory or discourse, and although Lacan is not named, *Speculum* is as much a challenge to Lacan as it is to Freud and to western philosophy." (Whitford, Margaret (ed): *The Irigaray Reader: Luce Irigaray*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1991, p. 6)

'residuum'".<sup>37</sup> These may, indeed, have been contributory factors, but it is my contention that the Acts were also a further manifestation of the gendered framing of women in association with the scopophilic male gaze. As such, they were, therefore, part of an ongoing hegemonic discourse which was constantly seeking new ways of retaining white male ascendancy, in a domestic and in an imperial setting. This is borne out by the fact that enlisted *men*, who at that time were drawn largely from the unrespectable poor, were not subjected to genital examination, nor were they liable to be apprehended for soliciting the services of prostitutes.<sup>38</sup> This factor resulted in limiting the successful outcome of female medical treatment because infected, untreated men remained sexually active, but it also ensured that it was women who were socially stigmatized, not men. As Barbara Caine points out, Josephine Butler herself, and subsequent historians of the period, have argued that the Infectious Diseases discourse was instrumental in fostering prostitution: "(f)ar from outlawing prostitution, ...the Acts and the police procedures encouraged it by enforcing the label on women and then ensuring that they were unable to escape it".<sup>39</sup>

The process of retaining hegemonic ascendancy was, therefore, dependent on the perpetuation of a discourse framing or categorizing women as morally inferior. This not only entailed the constant scrutiny of the figure of woman, but also the frequent iteration of figures of female culpability. Jacqueline Rose maintains that as far as the production of meaning is concerned, in the "encounter" between psychoanalysis, artistic practice, and the representation of sexual identity, "staging has *already taken place*" so that the encounter itself:

draws its strength from that repetition, working like a memory trace of something we have been through before. It gives back to repetition its proper meaning and status: not lack of originality or something merely derived (the commonest reproach to the work of art), nor the more recent practice of appropriating artistic and photographic images in order to undermine their previous status; but repetition as insistence, that is as the constant pressure of something hidden but not forgotten - something that can only come into focus now by blurring the field of representation where our normal forms of self-recognition take place.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Walkowitz, 1980, p. 3

<sup>38</sup>"(P)eriodic examination among soldiers had failed because enlisted men objected and officers feared that compulsory examination would lead to the demoralization of their men." (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 3)

<sup>39</sup>Caine, 1997, p. 109.

<sup>40</sup>Rose, Jacqueline: *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, Verso, London, 1986, p. 228.

In the nineteenth century, the production of the image of the sexually transgressive woman, or of woman as inherently culpable therefore served as a distorting mirror in which woman's "normal" form of self-recognition became blurred, and its frequent repetition ensured that the image was constantly reinforced. As a result, such images became readily absorbed as *explicit* signs of female inconstancy or frailty, and as *implicit* signs of male superiority, in all aspects of hegemonic discourse, and therefore in all media.

The emphasis on moral values during the Victorian era entailed that, in paintings and literature, moral interpretations and meanings were actively sought by nineteenth-century audiences. Lynda Nead stresses that "moral propriety was one of the criteria according to which a publicly-exhibited painting could be judged good or bad".<sup>41</sup> Indeed, audiences were familiar with the iconography of hegemonic discourse and visual and literary readings were symbiotic:

Painters relied heavily on the fact that the Victorian art public belonged to a literate society. Their middle- and upper-class audience at the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy had read the same novels and poems. They easily recognized character stereotypes from minimal indications and eagerly filled in backgrounds to the actions represented. Often a familiar image was all that was needed to release a flood of sentimental associations.<sup>42</sup>

The figure of the prostitute, or 'fallen woman', therefore became a recurring trope in literature and in the visual arts, where it functioned as a reminder of woman's latent fallibility and of the consequences of departing from the norms of idealized womanhood laid down by male hegemony. This discourse drew on the rhetoric of the Contagious Diseases Acts and on the metaphor of disease to represent the figure of the sexually transgressive woman as the pollutant of society.<sup>43</sup> The sexual role of woman

---

<sup>41</sup>Nead, Lynda: *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, p. 58.

<sup>42</sup>Roberts, Helene E.: 'Marriage, Redundancy or Sin: The Painter's View of Women in the First Twenty-Five Years of Victoria's Reign', in (ed.) Martha Vicinus: *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973, p. 46.

<sup>43</sup>The fact that venereal disease could, and did, infect married women (whose only sexual contact had been with their infected husbands) was viewed as proof that all women were "potential pollutants of men and reservoirs of infection"; this "evoked a more general hostility and dread of females and 'female nature'". (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 56) Acton's definition of a prostitute illustrates the way in which female sex workers were demonized: "She is a woman with half the woman gone, and that half containing all that elevates her nature, leaving her a mere instrument of impurity; degraded and fallen she extracts from the sin of others the means of living, corrupt and dependent on corruption, and therefore interested directly in the increase of immorality - a social pest carrying contamination and foulness to every quarter to which she has access, who -- 'like a disease,/Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,/Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes,'/--- 'and stirs the pulse,/With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young'" (Acton, 1972, p. 166)

was seen as purely reproductive; hence marriage and motherhood were held to be "both social *and* medical norms".<sup>44</sup> In contrast, female desire was held to be contrary to natural femininity and thus transgressive. As a result, both prostitution and adultery were seen as manifestations of 'unnatural' female behaviour, so that both the female prostitute and the 'fallen woman' were defined as being other.

Although they derive from different social backgrounds, in many artistic and literary representations in the genre these two figures are, nevertheless, codified and drawn together through a shared iconography.<sup>45</sup> As Holman Hunt's painting *The Awakening Conscience* implies, the genre depicting the sexually transgressive woman required her death to explicate the moral content of the fable, and, in many instances, the means of death portrayed was almost exclusively by drowning. This tied the female miscreant to the docklands, a favoured haunt of prostitutes, and accorded with the metaphor of disease by employing the river/sewer as a symbol of pollution, so that not only was the woman expressed as the contagious effluent of society, but her demise was also shown both as a voluntary act of contrition and as her annihilation within her own tide of corruption.

Linda Nochlin points out that in George Frederic Watts' *Found Drowned* (1848-50; fig. 1.7), "(t)he interpretation of the causes of the young woman's suicide would seem obvious to the nineteenth-century viewer, and were manifestly connected with Thomas Hood's widely known poem on the subject, 'The Bridge of Sighs'".<sup>46</sup> The poem considers the corpse of a female suicide by drowning, and appeals for compassion for a dead woman whose descent into immorality is signalled by the words "(o)ne of Eve's family", and by the fact that her hair has "(e)scaped from the comb". Yet although Hood condemns "Dissolute Man!" for his part in the woman's downfall and ultimate

---

<sup>44</sup>Nead, 1988, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup>Prostitution was almost exclusively the last resort of working-class women when other more socially-acceptable means of financial support were cut off: for example, when young women left the parental home for economic reasons, but were unable to find other work, or in order to supplement low wages as dressmakers, milliners, etc. (Walkowitz, 1980, pp. 14-21) Nead argues that prostitutes "kept middle-class women pure by satisfying the excessive sexual needs of men". (Nead, 1988, p. 50)

<sup>46</sup>Nochlin, Linda: 'Lost and *Found*, Once More the Fallen Woman', in (eds.) Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard: *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, Harper and Row, New York, 1982, p. 229. *Found Drowned* first went on show ca. 1848-50. (Nochlin, 1982, p. 228) A companion painting, *Under a Dry Arch*, was also painted by the same artist at the same time. (Roberts, 1973, p. 62)



demise in the twelfth stanza, by the seventeenth and final stanza he has returned to focus upon the woman's culpability:

Owning her weakness,  
Her evil behaviour,  
And leaving, with meekness,  
Her sins to her Saviour.<sup>47</sup>

Hood's closure with these lines, and the repetition of the pronoun "her" alongside "weakness", "evil behaviour", and "sins", invite the reader to conclude that any offence to society caused by the woman's moral lapse is her sole responsibility and that it is assuaged only by her death.

This genre of paintings and associated literary works was augmented, as indeed was the hegemonic discourse which it reflects, by a number of prominent writers and artists. For example, five years after Hood's poem, and in the year following Watts' painting, Charles Dickens and his illustrator Hablot K. Browne draw on what Lynda Nead has called "a conventional narrative of the prostitute as guilt-ridden outcast", and on the metaphor of disease, to depict the sexually aberrant Martha contemplating suicide amongst the "ooze and slush" on the noxious riverbank in *David Copperfield* (fig. 1.8).<sup>48</sup>

There was a story that one of the pits dug for the dead in the time of the Great Plague was hereabout; and a blighting influence seemed to have proceeded from it over the whole place. Or else it looked as if it had gradually composed into that nightmare condition, out of the overflowings of the polluted stream. As if she were a part of the refuse it had cast out, and left to corruption and decay, the girl we had followed strayed down to the river's brink, and stood in the midst of this night-picture, lonely and still, looking at the water.<sup>49</sup>

For Dickens' reference to "the Great Plague" it is possible to substitute 'the Great Social Evil', the nineteenth-century euphemism for prostitution, because Martha, as she freely admits, is "'bad, ...lost'" and believed by some to have "'corrupted'" the missing Emily.<sup>50</sup> Browne's engraving, 'The River', faithfully follows Dickens' text by juxtaposing Martha to a mass of industrial detritus which not only emphasizes the dichotomy between countryside and town, pastoral and industrial, prelapsarian and

<sup>47</sup>Hood, Thomas: 'Bridge of Sighs' (1844), in Francis Turner Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1994, pp. 255-257; first published 1861.

<sup>48</sup>Nead, 1988, p. 126.

<sup>49</sup>Dickens, Charles: *The Personal History, Adventures, Experience, and Observation of David Copperfield*, (ed. Nina Burgis) Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981, p. 580; first published in monthly serial parts by Bradbury and Evans, London, May 1849 - November 1850.

<sup>50</sup>Dickens, 1981, p. 582.

postlapsarian, but also suggests Martha herself as morally lapsed product of industrialized society, akin to the river with which hegemonic discourse has taught her to identify herself: "I know that I belong to it. I know that it's the natural company of such as I am! It comes from country places, where there was once no harm in it - and it creeps through the dismal streets, defiled and miserable..."<sup>51</sup>

Many of the paintings of the 'fallen woman' or prostitute as suicide by drowning, or potential suicide, use bridges to symbolize the social chasm the woman has crossed from the ideal of womanhood into her separate sphere as degraded outcast; in these the city is almost invariably represented in the background, emblemizing its corrupting influence in a postlapsarian world. George Frederic Watts' painting *Found Drowned* shows the woman's corpse under an arch (fig. 1.7). John Everett Millais and Gustave Doré also illustrated Hood's 'Bridge of Sighs' with etchings of the same name. In Millais' version, the figure of the woman is foregrounded at the river's edge, but is set against the bridge in the middle distance, with the city of London silhouetted beyond, and the shape of her cloak suggests that she has a baby in her arms (fig. 1.9). One version by Doré also shows a woman contemplating suicide in the river, again with the city beyond, her pregnancy suggested by the way in which her right arm is folded protectively over her waist (fig. 1.10). Another etching by Doré on the same theme shows boatmen recovering the woman's body from the river, again under an arch, with the city in the background (fig. 1.11).<sup>52</sup> Dickens describes Martha standing "almost within the cavernous shadow of the iron bridge", and in Browne's illustration this is indicated by the arched shaped of the upper edge of the etching itself (fig. 1.8).<sup>53</sup>

In Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting, *The Gate of Memory* (1857), this chasm is implied by the bridge-like archway through which a lonely prostitute gazes wistfully at the innocent pastimes of the young girls beyond who remind of her own lost purity (fig. 1.12). Yet Rossetti suggests that prostitution is contagious in more ways than one by placing a rat at the base of the archway between the woman and the girls. To

<sup>51</sup>"(R)usty iron monsters of steam-boilers, wheels, cranks, pipes, furnaces, paddles, anchors, diving-bells, windmill-sails, and I know not what strange objects..." (Dickens, 1981, pp. 580 & 581)

<sup>52</sup>John Everett Millais' *The Bridge of Sighs*, in *Passages from the Poems of Thomas Hood, Illustrated by the Junior Etching Club*, London, 1858; Gustave Doré's *The Bridge of Sighs*, in *Poems by Thomas Hood. Illustrated by Gustave Doré*, E. Moxon, Son & Co., London, 1878.

<sup>53</sup>Dickens, 1981, p. 580.

nineteenth-century audiences, the rat not only symbolized both the transmission of disease and an insalubrious city underworld, but like the prostitute, it was also "a source of fascination as well as horror".<sup>54</sup> As Lynda Nead reminds, "What is worrying about the rat is that it can disappear into a drain and come up anywhere". The positioning of the rat in Rossetti's painting is crucial, therefore, for as well as signalling the contagion of venereal disease it also suggests that prostitution itself is a "cycle of corruption and fall" which can be transmitted between generations.<sup>55</sup>

That the taint attached to the 'fallen woman' was held to be readily transferable from one generation to next, just as syphilis itself could be passed from parent to child, is also evident in Augustus Leopold Egg's triptych known as *Past and Present* (1858; figs. 1.13-15). The three sections and their catalogue caption tell of an adulterous wife, her expulsion from the family home, and the husband's consequent early death.<sup>56</sup> In the central panel, the adultery is discovered and the wife cast down. The remaining panels deal with a period some time later in order to render explicit the repercussions of female sexual transgression. In one, the adulterous mother is seen in the classic 'fallen woman' setting, under an archway beside a river, with her tiny illegitimate child clasped to her breast; in the other, the two legitimate daughters, now much older and effectively orphaned, mourn their father by a bedroom window. The tableaux demonstrating the aftermath of female sexual transgression not only provide a causal link between maternal transgression and youthful suffering by conjoining mother and daughters chronologically through the solitary, curiously-shaped cloud beneath the moon, but also their shamed, forsaken state and the humble simplicity of their apartment contrast with the opulence of their former familial surroundings to suggest straitened circumstance and loss of caste which predestine them, almost inevitably, for the street-life that their mother now leads.

---

<sup>54</sup>"The rat was no longer primarily an economic liability...it was the object of fear and loathing, a threat to civilized life. ...[I]t furtively emerged from the city's underground conscience as the demonized Other. But as it transgressed the boundaries that separated the city from the sewer, above from below, it was a source of fascination as well as horror." (Stallybrass, Peter & Allon White: *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Methuen, London, 1986, p. 143)

<sup>55</sup>Nead, 1988, p. 130.

<sup>56</sup>The original exhibition catalogue caption reads, "*August the 4th. Have just heard that B-- has been dead more than a fortnight, so his poor children have now lost both parents. I hear she was seen on Friday last near the Strand, evidently without a place to lay her head. What a fall hers has been!*". The three parts were displayed in one frame, with the discovery of adultery placed centrally, and the consequences of female sexual transgression displayed on either side (Nead, 1988, pp. 71-2)

### Indigency, redundancy, and emigration

There are consequently crowds of half-starved needlewomen, thousands of poor governesses, and a great many more feminine writers of novels than are supposed to be good for the health of the public; ...A woman who cannot be a governess or a novel-writer must fall back upon that poor little needle, the primitive and original handicraft of femininity.<sup>57</sup>

§§§

The strands of hegemonic discourse which mirrored the figure of woman as permanently poised on the brink of falling from respectability, and as a potential pollutant of society, contributed directly to a broader, but equally phallogocentric, discourse of imperialism in which the figure of the sexually transgressive woman was deployed to promote a discourse of female emigration. Against a background of rising concern about poverty and social deprivation, engendered by Henry Mayhew's *Morning Chronicle* survey of poverty in the metropolis in 1849, the 1851 census revealed that there was an excess of females over males in the British population. Following the revelation of female poverty and the gender imbalance in the population, the close scrutiny of the figure of woman was intense, resulting in the generation of a multiplicity of images of female frailty, mirroring female indigency or redundancy.

At the same time, however, the empire itself appeared to supply the solution to society's concerns about the excess of women: emigration to North America, Australia, South Africa and other colonies was increasingly popular, but more males had left Britain than females; also male transportation to Australia had exceeded female transportation. In order to establish viable colonies, therefore, emigrant women were required as wives and mothers, and also to provide a civilizing influence as "God's Police".<sup>58</sup> Consequently, a discourse promoting female emigration gathered impetus and reverberated throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century; female emigration societies were established, and the figure of the emigrant woman became an icon of both female redundancy and of imperialism in a further manifestation of the power of male hegemony to mirror woman's frailty.

---

<sup>57</sup>Oliphant, Margaret: 'The Condition of Women', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, February, 1858, reprinted in (ed.) Susan Hamilton: "*Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors*": *Nineteenth-Century Writings by Women on Women*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario, 1995, p. 213.

<sup>58</sup>"For all the clergy you can dispatch, all the schoolmasters you can appoint, all the churches you can build, and all the books you can export, will never do much good, without what a gentleman in that Colony very appropriately called 'God's police' - wives and little children - good and virtuous women." Chisholm, Caroline: *Emigration and Transportation Relatively Considered; in a Letter, Dedicated, by Permission, to Earl Grey*, John Ollivier, London, 1847, p. 21.

Recent research indicates that the belief that there was a vast surplus of redundant women is better described as a myth which “acquired a life of its own which no analyses of the figures, and there were many which disputed it, could dispel”.<sup>59</sup> The myth was fuelled by an apparently authoritative analysis by the social commentator, W.R. Greg, which was first published in 1862 and reprinted in pamphlet form in 1868 and 1869. In this lengthy, carefully-reasoned article, Greg considers the “sore evil” of female redundancy, estimating from the 1851 census figures in conjunction with emigration figures that “upwards” of five million people left Britain in the previous forty-five years and that the “vast majority” were men. He concludes that, because of the perceived gender imbalance, there were around one million women in Britain who were unlikely to be able to comply with what he calls “the despotic law of life ...the rule”, namely marriage, “the union of one man with one woman”, and that “more women are wanted in those new colonies ...than the mother country could supply them with”.<sup>60</sup>

Although Greg’s argument has since been undermined, the figure of the emigrant woman had already been called into being, and the myth of female redundancy persisted into the first decades of the twentieth century. Cecillie Swaisland concludes that it is likely that feminists stood by the myth of the redundant woman because emigration offered opportunities for women to become involved in evangelizing overseas, and to gain a foothold in building the empire.<sup>61</sup> Certainly, as I discuss in Chapter Five, there was a branch of the British feminist movement which actively promoted aspects of imperialism for this reason.

However, it is also possible to identify a phase in nineteenth-century rhetoric in which the figure of the indigent or redundant woman becomes linked explicitly to the figure of the sexually transgressive woman, and it is my contention that this fulfilled a double purpose for patriarchy, not only because it promoted imperialism, but also because it enabled a degree of control to be retained over women’s demands for employment in Britain, and over female sexuality. In this section, therefore, I discuss some of the ways

<sup>59</sup>Swaisland, Cecillie: *Servants and Gentlewomen to the Golden Land: The Emigration of Single Women from Britain to Southern Africa, 1820-1939*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1993, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup>Greg, W R.: ‘Why are Women Redundant?’, in *National Review*, 14 April, 1862, pp. 452, 442-443, & 438.

<sup>61</sup>Swaisland, 1993, p. 6.

in which figures of female indigency or redundancy were mirrored in cultural media and contributed, in turn, towards a discourse centring upon 'the female emigrant'. Like the prostitute and the 'fallen woman', these figures overrode underlying class considerations, and were closely linked through a readily decipherable iconography which drew and depended on the cultural omnipresence of the cautionary figure of the sexually transgressive woman.

In an age when the ideal of the patriarchal family prevailed, and when limited female education and a paucity of career opportunities for women meant that those who were unable to marry were obliged to support themselves in a range of lowly-paid jobs, there were fears that the gender imbalance and female redundancy would lead to widespread female prostitution, the spread of disease, and a consequent decline in the morality of the nation. Paradoxically, however, woman was deemed to be the very "matrix in which the human statue is cast".<sup>62</sup>

Woman was believed to play a central role in the formation of the public morality; she was responsible for the purity of the home, and private morality was the source and index of public morality. The moral condition of the nation, therefore was believed to derive from the moral standards of woman.<sup>63</sup>

Thus the preoccupation with the figures of the sexually transgressive woman and of the prostitute exposes a deeper concern about the future of the nation, and, even more importantly, of the empire, because both were dependent upon maintaining high standards of female morality in order to ensure the moral fibre and physical vigour of future generations, and, therefore, the moral and economic well-being of Britain and its place in the world order.

Early discussion about indigent women can be linked to genuine philanthropic efforts to improve social conditions, especially those experienced by women and young girls in the poorly-paid 'sweated' industries associated with garment production. In 1843, Anna Brownell Jameson concludes her commentary on *The Report and Appendices of the Children's Employment Commission* with the acerbic final sentence:

If the bloodless cheeks and attenuated frames of these poor milliner girls passed in array before the beauty their lives are sacrificed to adorn, it might perhaps, induce them to abate a little of the brilliance of our ball-rooms, for the preservation of the souls and

<sup>62</sup>Tilt, Edward: *Elements of Health, and Principles of Female Hygiene*, London, 1852, pp. 13 & 261, cited in Nead, 1988, p. 92.

<sup>63</sup>Nead, 1988, p. 92.

bodies of fifteen thousand of our fellow-beings.<sup>64</sup>

This viewpoint is echoed in Thomas Hood's poem, 'The Song of the Shirt', which "caught the conscience of the age as did no other poem".<sup>65</sup> It achieved instant success both for its author and for *Punch*, and is perhaps the best-known early nineteenth-century representation of 'the distressed needlewoman' stereotype.<sup>66</sup> Like Jameson, Hood presents two contrasting views of womanhood; on the one hand, he addresses the problems of subsistence pay for female workers in the clothing industry, and on the other he castigates the fashionable rich for their demands on that industry:

"O! Men, with Sisters dear!  
O! Men! with Mothers and Wives!  
It is not linen you're wearing out,  
But human creatures' lives!  
Stitch-stitch-stitch,  
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,  
Sewing at once, with a double thread,  
A Shroud as well as a shirt."<sup>67</sup>

Both works throw the complexities of Victorian gender ideology into relief. The home was regarded as a shrine, as the quasi-religious tone of the Registrar-General's introduction to the 1851 census confirms:

The possession of an entire house is strongly desired by every Englishman; for it throws a sharp well-defined circle round his family and hearth - the shrine of his sorrows, joys and meditations.<sup>68</sup>

Within the home the 'natural' function of women was believed to be as the supporters of men as wives, mothers, or daughters; men were projected as the cerebral providers of financial support in, but alienated by, a capitalist economy. Yet woman's role as unpaid worker within the home contributed to her continued subordination. Not only did the doctrine of separate male and female spheres ennoble the work of men and empower them through financial potency in a capital economy from which female competition was effectively debarred, but it also simultaneously disempowered women

---

<sup>64</sup>Jameson, Anna Brownell: 'The Milliners', *The Atheneum*, 4.3.1843, reprinted in Hamilton, 1995, p. 26.

<sup>65</sup>Clubbe, John (ed.): *Selected Poems of Thomas Hood*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1970, p. 26.

<sup>66</sup>"Such was the poem's immediate success that it changed both the course of that magazine's history and of Hood's life. ...Punch's circulation trebled, Hood's popularity soared." (Clubbe, 1970, p. 24-5)

<sup>67</sup>Hood, Thomas: 'The Song of the Shirt', *Punch*, 16.12.1843, Vol. V, July - December, 1843, p. 260.

<sup>68</sup>Mary Poovey: *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Virago, London, 1989, p. 205, n. 26; also Leonore Davidoff, "The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century England", in (ed.) Sandra Burman: *Fit Work for Women*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1979, p. 65.

by designating them as reproducers instead of producers and as dependants within a domestic exchange economy in which their labour appeared to be voluntary, thereby making them indebted to their male provider for his provision from within the capital economy. Furthermore, the gender imbalance revealed by the 1851 census meant that those women who remained unmarried and whose financial circumstances led them to seek paid work were, like Hood's needlewoman in her "unwomanly rags", deemed by some to have suffered loss of caste and to be 'unnatural' as they did not fulfil their 'natural' role in the home as the mainstay of men.<sup>69</sup>

The public preoccupation with the figures of redundant and/or distressed women is reflected in their prominence in nineteenth-century paintings. Those by Richard Redgrave, exhibited at the Royal Academy between the years 1840 and 1847, are of particular interest because of their close adherence to hegemonic constructions of womanhood and because their focus on woman's helplessness and marginality, and their popularity, served to endorse the rhetoric of male superiority and to justify male intervention in women's lives. Redgrave maintained that his work had a moral purpose:

"It is one of my most gratifying feelings, that many of my best efforts in art have aimed at calling attention to the trials and struggles of the poor and oppressed. ...I have had in view the 'helping them to right that suffer wrong' at the hands of their fellow men".<sup>70</sup>

Yet according to Helene Roberts, "(t)he Royal Academy accepted few paintings that threatened the precarious logic of laissez-faire or the carefully cultivated myth that dominance was the natural right of the male", and Redgrave was exceptional in exhibiting at the Academy because, although distressed women were the currency of cultural exchange, representations of human misery were not held to be "ennobling":

George Frederic Watts, George Smith, and Millais also represented distressed women, ...none of these works hung at the Royal Academy. It required considerable resourcefulness to cast the representation of the social ills of women in a form

<sup>69</sup> According to the 1851 census, males comprised 48.79% of the population, and females 51.21%. The disparity was most marked from the age of fifteen upwards, the period of life during which people were marriageable. In the age group fifteen to thirty-four, men accounted for 16.59% of the population and women 17.88%, in the age group thirty-five to fifty-four, men formed 9.62%, and women 10.19%, in the age group fifty-five to seventy-four men comprised 4.12% and women 4.70%; over seventy-five years of age men accounted for 0.62%, and women 0.81%. (Evans, Eric J.: *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783-1870*, Longman, Harlow, 1983, p. 411) Given that the total number of people over fifteen was 13,433,000, and that in this group there were 2.63% more women than men, then it is possible to speculate that there was an excess of around 353,288 women who might never marry.

<sup>70</sup> Autobiography of Richard Redgrave, A.R.A., in the *Art Journal*, XII, 1850, p. 49, cited in Roberts, 1973, p. 60.



acceptable to the official guardians of high art.

Redgrave's acceptance was achieved, she argues, by emphasizing "the pathetic, not the squalid, quality of distressed women. His heroines, from the genteel poor or the impoverished middle classes, were clean, neat and pretty, his style was delicate and soft".<sup>71</sup> Thus the figure of redundant or indigent woman, as portrayed in Redgrave's work, found favour because it reiterated, rather than challenged, the stereotypes of hegemonic discourse. Women were depicted as alienated from society and impoverished, but non-threatening; their solitary state rendered them 'unnatural' because they subsisted outside the normative family setting, but they were far from being the potential pollutant of society shown in Rossetti's *The Gate of Memory*.

The titles of Redgrave's paintings indicate the way in which hegemonic discourse utilized the various figures of female indigency or redundancy, readily recognizable from literature and other paintings of character types, to posit womanhood as a social problem requiring solution: *The Reduced Gentleman's Daughter* (1840), *Going to Service*, *The Fortune Hunter*, *The Poor Teacher* (all 1843), *The Sempstress* (1844) illustrating Hood's 'Song of the Shirt', *The Governess* (1845), and *Fashion's Slaves* (1847). Like Redgrave's *The Sempstress* (1846; fig. 1.16), George Frederic Watts' painting, *The Seamstress* (1850; fig. 1.17), also owes its provenance to Hood's poem, but whereas Redgrave's work appears to heroicize the needlewoman's distress by representing her eyes raised heavenwards as if invoking divine intervention, Watts' portrayal is a study of despair: unlike Redgrave's more comely model, the needlewoman is emaciated and slumps wearily on her left elbow, her sunken eyes partially covered by the fingers of her left hand.<sup>72</sup>

These representations of the indigent needlewoman stereotype were given further dimension with the publication of Mayhew's detailed account of needlewomen's incomes in 1849.<sup>73</sup> The same year, *Punch* published a series of items also focusing on

---

<sup>71</sup>Roberts, 1973, pp. 75 & 56-57.

<sup>72</sup>There was more than one version of Redgrave's *The Sempstress*. The original was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1844.

<sup>73</sup>Amongst needlewomen Mayhew lists "Stay-stitchers, Shoe-binders, Stock-makers, Cloak-makers, Upholsteresses (*sic*), and Distressed Gentlewomen working at plain needlework". (Letter IX, dated Friday November 16, 1849; in Mayhew, Henry: *The Morning Chronicle Survey of the Labour and the Poor: The Metropolitan Districts, Vol. 1*, Caliban Books, Firlie, Sussex, 1980, pp. 170-1) This letter records that Continued on next page...

the needlewoman. However, despite the underlying charitable concern for the poverty-stricken which was manifested in the work of writers such as Mayhew and Dickens, and public demands for an explanation for the apparent increase in the numbers of indigent women, the *Punch* items testify to the existence of a hegemonic discourse which continued to draw on the already established iconography of female culpability. Two companion pictures in *Punch*, 'Pin Money' and 'Needle Money', contrast the haggard figure of a seamstress to the image of an affluent lady attended by her maid at her toilette.<sup>74</sup> In 'Needle Money' (fig. 1.18), as in Redgrave's *The Sempstress*, the needlewoman, coded as respectable through her neat apparel and tidily arranged hair, works by dim candlelight in her sparsely-furnished garret. Both representations emphasize the fact that she is obliged to work throughout the night by showing a darkened sky and solitary candles which have burned down. In 'Pin Money' (fig. 1.19), the gazes of both women are directed at a piece of jewellery in the form of a snake, symbolizing Eve's temptation and fall. Together, the caption, the snake jewel, and the mirror before which the lady sits, suggest the commodification of women and female sexual transgression. Like Hood's 'Song of the Shirt' and Jameson's commentary, the juxtaposition of 'Pin Money' to 'Needle Money' serves to measure the true cost of fashion in lives of needlewomen, but whereas Hood and Jameson attribute blame to men and women alike, the *Punch* illustrations suggest that the needlewoman's ordeal can be ascribed to the sexual foibles of women alone.

Further *Punch* items confirm a doctrine of female culpability whilst also indicating a shift in the debate about female indigency. On the one hand they establish that a key strand of hegemonic discourse derived from the anxiety that widespread prostitution would follow female destitution leading inevitably to a moral breakdown in society, and on the other hand they propose female emigration as the solution for the problem of the redundant, or superfluous, woman. The semantic content of the poem, 'The Needlewomen's Farewell', reinforces the pictorial content of the double drawing, 'The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad' on the facing page (fig. 1.20).<sup>75</sup> Ironically entitled

---

<sup>73</sup>Continued from previous page...

stay-stitchers could earn 7½d. per day, shoebinders, stockmakers, and cloakmakers 2/-, 5/-, 4/8d. per week respectively; one distressed needlewoman interviewed pawned clothing and bed-clothing, being unable to subsist on the 2s.4 ½d. per week earned over the four preceding weeks.

<sup>74</sup>*Punch*, Vol. XVII, July - December, 1849, pp. 250-1.

<sup>75</sup>*Punch*, Vol. XVIII, January - June 1850 pp. 14 & 15.

'At Home', one half of the illustration represents the needlewoman as homeless on the streets in the snow outside a gin palace by night. Her location and dress suggest her as sexually transgressive; she clasps a shapeless bundle, possibly a tiny baby, to her breast whilst a child in rags behind her hungrily seeks sustenance from a pot; at the same time she is turning away from the stern male figure as if rebuffed.<sup>76</sup>

The poem confirms that indigent woman's fall into immorality has been enforced through necessity, and pays credit to those writers who, like Mayhew, "came among us ...and to a wondering world,/That gathered pale to hear the tale, revealed in part our story". The eponymous needlewomen recount their tale of demanding work "with straining eyes, in squalid rooms, and chill", and bemoan their "nights of pain and shameful gain, about the darkling city" where "(b)ody and soul" have been exchanged "for food". As "(t)he past looms dark behind", they leave for a "future fair" overseas in "wedlock's tie, not harlotry". Their rosy prospects as emigrants are corroborated in the other drawing, entitled 'Abroad'. Here, in a settler's hut, a contented husband looks on approvingly as his neatly-dressed wife enjoys woman's prescribed role as home keeper and mother, their comfortable lifestyle indicated by his easy manner and by the abundance of food in the form of the hams hanging from the ceiling, the bread in the standing child's hand, and the animals visible through the open doorway.

The drawings and poem appear to expose a basic slippage in nineteenth-century gender ideology. Paradoxically, woman is always liable to fall from grace and into harlotry, but at the same time she is also revered, as the second drawing suggests, as the epicentre of family morality, the supporter of man, and the matrix of succeeding generations. Yet this contradictory elision is rationalized in the *Punch* illustrations by the presence in each of a male authority figure. This conveys a series of messages with an inbuilt logic: man's role is supervisory; patriarchy is ubiquitous; female disobedience results in suffering to both women and children; female compliance results in rewards not just for women and children, but also for society as a whole; female emigration is compliance with the needs of society.

---

<sup>76</sup>According to Nead, Martha in *David Copperfield* is characterized as sexually transgressive by her "feathered bonnet and ...shawl, two familiar components of a physical stereotype of a prostitute" (Nead, 1988, p. 126)

Hegemonic discourse applied a similar reasoning to other figures of the indigent or redundant female who were unlikely to marry in Britain, and the figure of the governess, in particular, captured the public imagination. However, concern about the role of the governess was also underpinned by tensions relating to class and sexual morality. Highlighting the issues of class in relation to the "status incongruence" of the Victorian governess, M. Jeanne Peterson maintains that although it was accepted that "a well-bred woman did not earn her own living", Victorian upper- or middle-class families were able to seek 'ladies' to teach their children because becoming a governess was the one paid occupation for women of birth which did not involve loss of caste as it was transacted within the home and replicated the 'natural' duties of a mother.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, well-bred women were sought as governesses because class was seen as an indicator of morality.

Nevertheless, the position of governess was fraught with ambiguity precisely because she was in the home, and because class and sexuality remained inextricably linked. Mary Poovey points out that the governess was "the prime example of the redundant woman":

as a consequence she constituted the border between the normative (working) man and the normative (nonworking) woman. Not a mother, the governess nevertheless performed the mother's tasks; not a prostitute, she was nevertheless suspiciously close to other sexualized women; not a lunatic, she was nevertheless deviant simply because she was middle-class woman who had to work and because she was always in danger of losing her middle-class status and her 'natural' morality.<sup>78</sup>

The governess therefore occupied a state of limbo somewhere between the family and the rest of society. By virtue of the fact that she was a paid employee, she did not fit socially within the family for whom she worked. Indeed, although she *was* fulfilling the role of the mother, the children were not her own and she was therefore not fulfilling her 'natural' role. This denial of the 'natural' function of the female body was seen as physically and mentally frustrating, and led to the general belief that, on the one hand the governess might constitute a sexual threat within the milieu where she was employed and therefore become a moral threat to her charges, but on the other

---

<sup>77</sup>Peterson, M. Jeanne: 'The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society', in (ed.) Martha Vicinus, *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973, p. 6.

<sup>78</sup>Poovey, 1989, p. 14.

hand, if her sexuality remained unfulfilled then mental instability might ensue.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, just as the needlewoman was perceived as liable to descend into prostitution because of low wages, so the poorly-paid governess was also seen as a potentially dangerous economic outcast liable to seek social improvement through upwardly-mobile sexual liaison or marriage.<sup>80</sup>

Richard Redgrave's painting, *The Governess*, portrays her as eminently respectable, but her social alienation is made explicit by both canvas and caption, 'She sees no kind domestic visage near' (fig. 1.21).<sup>81</sup> The governess is pensive and plainly-dressed, and her downcast eyes, black-edged letter on her lap, and mourning dress tell of grief and isolation. Confined within a sombre interior, she is clearly dissociated from her own home and from her three young female charges, two of whom who are seen skipping in the symbolically well-lit, outdoor, background scene. Whilst these girls are self-enclosed and self-absorbed, held in their own happy sphere by the positioning of the rope, their arms and the sunlight, the third daughter of the house looks on wistfully at her sisters' enjoyment, but her proximity to the open door indicates social mobility for she might easily join them. In contrast, the posture of the governess and her placing in the room suggest that she is not only divorced from the recreation afforded by the piano, the three girls, and the encircling light, but also that she is cut off from any means of escape by the visual barrier created by the strong, dark, vertical lines of the table between her and the door. Unlike the daughters of the house whose brighter future is suggested by the sunlight which surrounds them, she remains static, unable to move into 'normal' female middle-class society to fulfil the natural role of woman.

---

<sup>79</sup>It was believed that governesses were more prone to mental illness than any other category of employed female. Harriet Martineau writes that "spirit-broken governesses" constituted "the largest class of the insane". (Martineau, Harriet: 'Female Industry', in *Edinburgh Review*, April 1859, reprinted in ed. Hamilton, 1995, pp. 29 and 42) A number of other nineteenth-century writers, such as Edward Gibbon Wakefield and Elizabeth Sewell, also subscribed to this view. (Hammerton, A. James: *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830-1914*, Croom Helm, London, 1979, pp. 25-7)

<sup>80</sup>The pay of governesses was "notoriously" low, with their average salary at £20-£45 *per annum*. At around the same period, a housekeeper might earn £40-£50 per year, cooks £12-£18, housemaids £10-£14, and nursemaids £5-£30. (Peterson, 1973, pp. 7-8.)

<sup>81</sup>Redgrave's *The Governess* is later a version of his painting, *The Poor Teacher* (1843), with the addition of the figures of the three girls. Redgrave painted four versions of the painting but included the girls in this one in order to lighten its tone at the request of his patron, John Sheepshanks, who was moved by earlier paintings depicting the governess's solitude. (Roberts, 1973 pp. 58)

The significance of redundant and indigent female figures to hegemonic discourse is suggested by the prominence given to an article entitled 'Our Female Supernumeraries' which featured as the first item of the new year in the January edition of *Punch*, 1850. The concluding paragraph shifts from the ironic tone of the first six paragraphs, mocking attempts to solve the problem of the redundant woman, to a perspective reflecting hegemonic ideology:

**Our Own View.** - It is lamentable that thousands of poor girls should starve here upon slops, working for slopsellers, and not only dying old maids because dying young, when stalwart mates and solid meals might be found for all in Australia. Doubtless, they would fly as fast as the Swedish hen-chaffinches - if only they had the means of flying. It remains with the Government and the country to find them wings.<sup>82</sup>

As the title indicates, the source of the problem is perceived solely in terms of an excess of females over males due to male emigration. The article itself projects marriage as woman's only vocation and fails to address the provision of wider employment opportunities for women; nor does it suggest better rates of pay or improved conditions of work. Female emigration is proposed as the sole solution to the problem of female superfluity and indigency because it is believed to guarantee women marriage and an improved standard of living. Significantly, it is proffered as a matter of national importance demanding government intervention.

This preoccupation with the figures of the indigent or redundant women, the fear of widespread female sexual transgression, and a widespread interest in emigration generally, entailed that the female emigrant became a further signifier of woman's subordination within the hegemonic symbolic system. Indeed, because female emigration offered the solution to a number of society's problems, namely female indigency, female prostitution, and female superfluity, by subsuming all problematic representations of womanhood under the heading of potential or actual female emigrant, those problems could seem to be banished from British shores just as effectively as deportation had dealt with the perceived problem of criminality some years earlier. Ideologically, the expediency of criminal transportation foreshadowed the various campaigns to encourage female emigration because, like the *Punch* items, representations of the female emigrant tended to suggest that it was incumbent upon

<sup>82</sup>*Punch*, Vol. XVIII, January - June, 1850, p. 1. The reference to "Swedish hen-chaffinches" is explained by the preceding paragraph in the commentary, 'The Naturalist's View', which draws on the observations of the Swedish scientist, Linnaeus, that "in Sweden and other northern countries, in winter, the females migrate, and leave the males bachelors".

redundant or indigent women to emigrate by imputing that they were guilty of deviating from normative femininity. Not only was mass female emigration seen as advantageous for British society, but benefits for the colonies were also propounded: the civilizing influence of women would result in the improvement of morals in the far-flung corners of the nascent British empire where the settler population was, at this time, predominantly male, colonies desperately needed female workers, and female immigration would ensure the production of future generations.<sup>83</sup>

This was a project which captured the national imagination and also appealed to women's rights campaigners, as it was believed by many that emigration genuinely offered women life chances not available in Britain. In 1862, the year in which Greg's article first appeared, the feminist, Frances Power Cobbe, argues in an impassioned article entitled 'What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?', that the "actual ratio" of unmarried women was around thirty per cent, which she estimated as being 440,000 women. Although she also demands the enhancement of the female experience in Britain, in the form of better education, increased employment opportunities, and fairer pay, she contends, "we must make the utmost efforts to promote marriage by emigration of women to the colonies, and all other means in our power".<sup>84</sup>

Emigration schemes of all kinds proliferated during the nineteenth century, but in particular female emigration schemes and associated charitable organisations, many of which survived into the twentieth century in some shape or form. One of the best-known schemes was Sidney Herbert's Fund for Promoting Female Emigration, initially set up to assist the emigration of needlewomen but later extended to include other women. Instituted in the aftermath of Mayhew's *Morning Chronicle* articles on the London poor in 1849, Herbert's Fund attracted much publicity and featured in *Punch* on several occasions throughout 1850. Other nineteenth-century schemes included the British Ladies Female Emigrant Society, established in 1849 to provide chaperones to accompany female emigrant voyages, the Female Middle Class

---

<sup>83</sup>Bounties were introduced in 1835 as an inducement to recruit female emigrants to Australia, but demands for female domestics and farm servants were "particularly vociferous" from 1848-50 and from 1854-55. (Haines, Robin F.: *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-60*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1997, pp. 152 & 30)

<sup>84</sup>Cobbe, Frances Power: 'What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?', in *Fraser's Magazine*, November, 1862; reprinted in Hamilton, 1995, pp. 85, & 86-7.

Emigration Society founded in 1862 by Maria Rye and Jane Lewin and supported by the Ladies of Langham Place, the Women's Emigration Society (1880), and the British Women's Emigration Association (1884).<sup>85</sup> However, perhaps the most celebrated scheme of the mid-nineteenth century was Caroline Chisholm's 'Family Colonisation Loan Society', initiated in 1849. Such was the interest generated by this particular scheme that she was venerated by some almost as a saint; although it was set up in Britain to assist families to borrow money to fund their emigration, much of its work focused on the welfare of female emigrants on the voyage to Australia and after their arrival.<sup>86</sup>

Chisholm's work came to the attention of Charles Dickens just as he was setting up his weekly family magazine, *Household Words*, and he obtained information on emigration from her for an article which appeared in its first edition in March 1850.<sup>87</sup> Dickens' interest in female emigration establishes the link between the figure of the sexually transgressive woman and the figure of the emigrant woman, as he was involved in supporting Angela Burdett Coutts' charitable Urania Cottage venture to rehabilitate prostitutes and to prepare suitable candidates from amongst them for eventual emigration to Australia.<sup>88</sup> As coadjutor of Urania Cottage, Dickens' contribution to the scheme was considerable; he was "chiefly responsible for day-to-day running, including the payment of bills and salaries from money paid into his account by Miss Coutts", and a letter to her suggests that on occasions he also went out into the streets himself to

---

<sup>85</sup>The Female Middle Class Emigration Society (F.M.C.E.S.) arose from feminist initiatives to create work for women. Emily Faithfull and Maria Rye were founder-members, with others, of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (1859); Faithfull instituted the Victoria Press (1860), to train and employ women, and the *Victoria Magazine* (1863); Rye set up the Law Copying Society (1869) and the Telegraph School, with the same aim. The F.M.C.E.S. and the British Ladies' Female Emigration Society merged as the Colonial Emigration Society (1884), run by Mrs. Adelaide Ross, organiser of the Women's Emigration Association (1880-1884). The United British Women's Emigration Association (1884), later the British Women's Emigration Association, took over the Colonial Emigration Association (1892).

<sup>86</sup>Caroline Chisholm (1808-77), philanthropist. On furlough in Australia with her husband (1838-46), and appalled by the conditions experienced by immigrant women and children, she petitioned Governor George Gipps to underwrite the cost of respectable accommodation for them at the Female Immigrants' Home she established in Sydney. She also set up a registry matching job-seeking immigrant women with approved employers up country and arranged their transport into the bush by bullock cart. On her return to England (1846) she petitioned the Colonial Office for improvements in female emigration.

<sup>87</sup>Dickens, Charles: 'A Bundle of Emigrants' Letters', *Household Words*, 30.3.1850, in (ed.) Harry Stone: *Charles Dickens' Uncollected Writings from Household Words, Vol. 1 1850-1859*, University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 1968, pp. 85-96. Chisholm provided the letters; Dickens wrote the background text after meeting her on 26.2.1850, also using her emigration handbook, *The ABC of Colonization. In a Series of Letters* (John Ollivier, London, 1850), for additional information.

<sup>88</sup>Urania Cottage, Shepherd's Bush, opened in 1847. (Storey, Graham, Kathleen Tillotson, & Nina Burgis: *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Vol. VI 1850-52*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, p. 4n)



seek recruits: "(i)n the course of my nightly wanderings in strange places, I have spoken to several women and girls, who are very thankful, but make a fatal and decisive confusion between emigration and transportation".<sup>89</sup> From this it is apparent that the rhetorical links between female sexual transgression and emigration schemes for women were clear, and that female emigration was perceived, by some women, as a form of punishment.

As a popular writer, Dickens was influential in moulding the public consciousness. Moreover, his letters and literary output reveal that his level of involvement in the promotion of emigration, especially female emigration, appears to have been widely known at the time both by his acquaintances and by the reading public. Not only did he correspond with magistrates who might be able to put him and Miss Coutts in touch with likely candidates for Urania Cottage and a new life in the colonies, but also the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell wrote early in 1850 asking him to assist in the emigration of an unfortunate girl she knew.<sup>90</sup> Following his article on Chisholm's scheme, Dickens went on to support emigration energetically in the columns of *Household Words*, with some articles focusing exclusively on female emigration.<sup>91</sup>

He also promoted the advantages of emigration in some of his novels, with opportunities overseas featuring prominently in the plots. *David Copperfield*, which he was writing even as the first issue of *Household Words* went to press, concludes by resolving the problems of some supporting characters with their departure to settle

---

<sup>89</sup>Storey, Tillotson & Burgis, 1988, p. 4n; letter dated 12.4.1850, in Storey, Tillotson, & Burgis, 1988, p. 83; recruits were also drawn from Ragged Schools. (Storey, Tillotson, & Burgis, 1988, p. 513)

<sup>90</sup>"I assist my friend Miss Coutts in the management of a small private Institution she maintains, for reclaiming young women, instructing them in all sound domestic knowledge and sending them out to Australia or elsewhere. ...As I am in the habit of observing (at a distance) the humanity and wisdom with which you administer justice, it has occurred to me that you might, at some time or other, have a miserable girl before you, for whom you would be happy to make such good provision. If this should ever be, and you would write to me, I should be very happy to come to you and understand the case." (26.7.1850 to W.J. Broderip, magistrate; similar letters confirm his interest in recruit destitute or fallen women via the courts: Storey, Tillotson, & Burgis, 1988, pp. 136, 541, & 618-620). Gaskell sought his assistance in arranging the emigration of "a 16-year-old girl, called Pasley, in Manchester's New Bailey Prison for theft and prostitution". (8.1.1850 & 9.1.1850; Storey, Tillotson, & Burgis, 1988, p. 6n and p. 6)

<sup>91</sup>These include: (bold denotes articles on female emigration) Chisholm, Caroline & R.H. Horne: 'Pictures of Life in Australia' (22.6.50); Sidney, Samuel: 'Family Colonisation Loan Society' (24.8.50); 'Three Colonial Epochs' (31.1.1852), 'Better Ties than Red Tape Ties' (28.2.1852), & 'What to take to Australia' (3.7.1852); Wills, W.H.: 'Safety for Female Emigrants' (31.5.51) & 'Official Emigration' (1.5.52); Morley, Henry: 'A Rainy Day on the *Euphrates*' (24.1.52).

overseas.<sup>92</sup> In subsequent novels, too, Dickens simultaneously promotes and reflects the ongoing public interest in the life chances presented by empire and emigration. *Hard Times* (1854) closes with Tom being sent to the colonies, and in *Great Expectations* (1860-1) Pip's expectations are realized through the fortune Magwitch has succeeded in amassing in Australia. As Edward Said points out, "(w)hat Dickens envisions for Pip, being Magwitch's 'London Gentleman', is roughly equivalent to what was envisioned by English benevolence of Australia, one social space authorizing another".<sup>93</sup> Like the broader contemporaneous discourse of emigration, and like Ford Madox Brown's painting, *The Last of England* (1855; fig. 1.22), which holds out the hope of rescue from poverty in the appropriately-named lifeboat, Eldorado, in the background, and which makes the female emigrant holding the hand of her tiny baby the most significant figure through a series of concentric circles focusing inwards, Dickens projects the empire as a place of enrichment for women as well as for men. Set against the popularity of his work and his resultant high profile as the "Conductor" of the nineteenth-century public imagination through *Household Words* and through his novels, his enthusiasm for emigration and his work with the Home for Homeless Women proved to be significant factors in the production of the female emigrant as icon within the hegemonic symbolic system during the middle years of the nineteenth century and beyond.<sup>94</sup>

A further item in *Punch*, 'Waiting at the Station' by William Makepeace Thackeray, brings the attitudes of male hegemony to female emigration, and to women generally, into sharp focus.<sup>95</sup> It shows a party of thirty-eight female emigrées, under the auspices of Sidney Herbert's Female Emigration Scheme, awaiting their departure from Fenchurch Street Station to Blackwall and thence their ultimate embarkation for Australia. In it he attacks a mother country "under whose government they had only neglect and wretchedness", an "(a)wful, awful poor man's country" which obliges them

<sup>92</sup>Stone, 1968, p. 87.

<sup>93</sup>Said, Edward: *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1993, p. xvii.

<sup>94</sup>Dickens preferred "Conductor", rather than editor, to describe his role in managing *Household Words*. (Letter to Miss Coutts, 4.2.1850, Storey, Tillotson, & Burgis, 1988, p. 28) Its circulation was immense and it was highly influential: "It has been estimated that Dickens' weekly magazine *Household Words* (1850-59) which published a series of weekly articles on Australia by Samuel Sidney, Caroline Chisholm, John Capper and others between 1851 and 1853, was read by many more than the 36 000 to 40 000 people who purchased each twopenny edition". (Haines, 1997, p. 171)

<sup>95</sup>Thackeray, William Makepeace (under the pseud. 'Spec'): 'Waiting at the Station', *Punch*, Vol XXVIII, 9.3.1850, pp. 92-3.

to emigrate and he blames a class system which teaches that "a poor person should naturally bob her head to a rich one physically and morally".

Even allowing for the acidulous nature of Thackeray's attack on inequality in society, and the satirical nature of some items published in *Punch*, his article is a curious example of nineteenth-century assumptions underpinning patriarchal power in its analysis of the plight of the "homely bevy of women" who, unlike the imaginary male reader he addresses, are located as an uncultured lower caste as they "have not your tastes and feelings: your education and refinements":

If you were an Australian sultan, to which of these would you throw the handkerchief? I am afraid not one of them. I fear, in our present mood of mind, we should mount horse and return to the country, preferring a solitude, and to be a bachelor, rather than to put up with one of these for a companion.<sup>96</sup>

Thackeray's words are additional confirmation that women are defined, or framed, through the scopophilic male gaze, and measured according to their sexual allure and their degree of conformity to the norms of femininity laid down by patriarchy; as a result, "homely" women who do not marry are ostracized. The phrase, "Australian sultan", foregrounds and exoticizes patriarchal supremacy, suggesting simultaneously a male hierarchy, the wealth-accumulating potential and status which Australian emigration promises men, and that emigrant women are subservient and commodified candidates destined for a potentate's harem. Underlying the article as a whole is the double-headed assumption that for women, marriage is the only option and that it is the only means of individual female self-improvement. Paradoxically, Thackeray's sympathy for the emigrées is manifested in class terms, yet his narrative perpetuates the tropes of hegemonic discourse, which posit women as members of a distinct, yet inferior class.

It is important to note at this stage of my argument that the ideology which promoted female emigration ran parallel to patriarchal assumptions that the burgeoning empire was a resource to be freely exploited by Britain. Edward Said has pointed out that these imperial arrogations were deeply rooted within the Victorian collective consciousness, as Dickens' *Dombey and Son* indicates:

The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon made to

---

<sup>96</sup>Thackeray, 1850, pp. 92.

give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprise; stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre.<sup>97</sup>

Said argues that “the way in which Dickens expresses Dombey’s egoism recalls, mocks, yet ultimately depends on the tried and true discourse of imperial free trade”.<sup>98</sup> In other words, Dickens’ work not only reflects imperial practice but it also enacts and perpetuates it by absorbing and utilizing its assumptions. However, these assumptions are also those of the masculinist discourse of gender. Just as Dombey does not question his belief that he has the right to trade across the globe, so Dickens does not appear to question his own role in promoting the emigration of women, nor Thackeray his in proclaiming the status of the “Australian sultan” vis-à-vis emigrant women and the continent of Australia. It was precisely these imperial arrogations, and their connection with patriarchal power and the gendered framing of women which, as colonies became established, colonial women writers sought to explore and challenge.

### Transgressive femininity and women’s literature

But it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex; naturally this is so. Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. ... And these values are transferred from life to fiction. This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room.<sup>99</sup>

§§§

In her seminal text, *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter argues that there is a discernible female literary tradition which gathered strength from the nineteenth century onwards resulting in the evolution of a distinct female literary voice. As she acknowledges, women writers have suffered from what Germaine Greer has called “the phenomenon of the transience of female literary fame”, because although great numbers of women writers were published throughout the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century, and enjoyed popularity in their lifetimes, many have disappeared from view.<sup>100</sup> There are, as she maintains, few women writers in the literary canon; women’s territory is a desert in which Jane Austen, the Brontë Sisters, George Eliot, and Virginia Woolf stand out. Gaye Tuchman contends that this can be

<sup>97</sup>Dickens, Charles: *Dombey and Son* (1846-8), Chapter 1.

<sup>98</sup>Said, 1993, p. 14.

<sup>99</sup>Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One’s Own*, Hogarth Press, London, 1929, reprinted in *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas* (ed. Michèle Barratt), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1993, p. 67.

<sup>100</sup>Greer, Germaine: ‘Flying Pigs and Double Standards’, in *Times Literary Supplement*, 26.7.74.

explained by changes in the literary world which took place in the course of the nineteenth century, and that although "(b)efore 1840 at least half of all novelists were women; by 1917 most high-culture novelists were men".<sup>101</sup>

As the work of many colonial women writers of the same period was exposed to the same critical audience and to similar market-forces as women at the metropolitan centre, and also suffered a decline into relative obscurity following initial popularity, and because the phenomenon of the transience of female literary fame appears to result from the distorting effect of the patriarchal mirror on womanhood, in order to establish the literary climate and contextualize the vigorous and impassioned nature of the counter-discourse mounted by colonial feminist writers, in this section I shall consider briefly the dynamics at work. Moreover, as I argue in subsequent chapters, for colonial women the act of writing was not only an act of political assertion responding to hegemonic constructions of womanhood, but also it became a means of forging a new sense of the female self and female belonging in the face of masculinist nationalism in the 'new' countries of the empire.

Both Showalter and Tuchman indicate that the transience of female literary fame results from the application of a critical double standard. Tuchman goes further than this by attempting to establish how male hegemony operated in the literary world and by undertaking a quantitative analysis of male control of institutions. Basing her argument on research into the archives of the Macmillan publishing house and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, she maintains that, between 1840 and the close of the nineteenth century, men "used their control of major literary institutions to transform the high-culture novel into a male preserve".<sup>102</sup> However, from my research it is apparent that women's writing and publishing was also controlled through the tropological figure of the woman reader and that this was used to exert influence over both the reading *and* writing of nineteenth-century women. Crucially, like other rhetorical figures discussed in this chapter, the tropes of the woman reader and the woman writer were reflected through a phallogocentric discourse predicated upon the figure of the sexually transgressive woman.

---

<sup>101</sup>Tuchman, Gaye (with Nina E. Fortin): *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers, and Social Change*, Routledge, London, 1989, p. 7.

<sup>102</sup>Tuchman, 1989, p. 5.

In Augustus Egg's triptych, *Past and Present*, the central panel (fig. 1.13) makes explicit the way in which hegemonic discourse established links between female sexual transgression and literature. As Lynda Nead points out, the collapsing house of cards to the left of the picture has as its base a Balzac novel:

The French novel is an important element of the narrative because it indicates the source of the woman's deviancy and the cause of her fall from virtue. French society was regarded as unstable and dangerous, its literature was believed to be a source of corruption and immorality and many contemporaries were concerned about the harmful reverberations of French morality in England. This French threat is represented in a very specific way in Egg's picture. The novel is the foundation of the fragile card-castle; through its harmful influence on the wife/mother, French morality infiltrates English society at the very base of its structure. By contaminating woman's moral values and feminine purity the entire social structure collapses.<sup>103</sup>

Although Nead ascribes the symbolic collapse of the social structure in Egg's work to the fact that the book at its base represents French morality, nineteenth-century audiences viewing the painting would also be familiar with the argument proposed by hegemonic ideology that novels, especially romantic novels, were potentially dangerous to women in particular, and hence to society at large.

In a study of female readership covering the period from Queen Victoria's accession until the outbreak of World War I, Kate Flint argues that during the nineteenth century 'the woman reader' became a meaningful recurring figure, in books and in other cultural media, as a signifier of multiple and often contradictory meanings for the nineteenth-century audience. Although Flint stresses that anxiety about the woman reader was not new, she maintains that the extension of literacy to wider sections of the population, and the rise of the novel, served to focus attention on the effects of reading on women at this time:

Either the woman is improved and educated through access to approved knowledge, which builds on the innately valuable characteristics which she was presumed to retain within her own body; or the reading of the forbidden leads to her downfall.<sup>104</sup>

As she points out, this ambivalence is apparent in Rossetti's paintings, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-9; fig. 1.23) and *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini* (1855; fig. 1.24).

<sup>103</sup>Nead, 1988, p. 73.

<sup>104</sup>From as early as the sixteenth century writers draw attention to the woman reader as a discrete audience and to the dangers for women in indiscriminate reading. Flint lists William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566), Thomas Salter's *A Mirrhor mete for all Mothers, Matrones, and Maidens*, (1579), Edward Hake's *A Touchestone for this time present* (1574), William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622, 1627, 1634). Even Mary Wollstonecraft advises against sentimental fiction in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), as it places "more reliance on their sensations than on reason". (Flint, Kate: *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993, p. 18 & pp. 22-5)

The former shows Mary's mother teaching her the womanly art of needlework, but the juxtaposition of the Virgin, the pile of books standing before her, and the emblematic lily of virginal purity which she copies into her embroidery on the red stole, foregrounds the importance of educational purity; not only are the spines of the books inscribed with the cardinal virtues, charity, faith, prudence, hope, temperance, and fortitude, but also the books themselves are bound appropriately in the colour traditionally associated with each virtue.<sup>105</sup> The second painting is equally significant because it indicates that reading can lead to loss of control: Paolo and Francesca are conjoined by their embrace and by the book resting on their knees, its contents having enflamed their passions.

Flint points out that the male preoccupation with pictorial representations of the woman reader is a manifestation of scopophilia, and she maintains that there are two distinct categories of the controlling male gaze at work here. The first, which she describes as "fetishistic", can be seen as a compulsion for reassurance because it relates to the containment of woman "within recognized domestic categories", as in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. However, in the second category, which she terms "voyeuristic", the book functions in very much the same way as I have argued that the mirror functions in Rossetti's woman-and-mirror paintings, because the book imports female sexual transgression to the act of reading, as in *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini*:

It presumes a narrative, whether of corruption and transgression or of redemption and forgiveness: either is dependent on the establishment of guilt, hence reinforcing the spectator's sense of control.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, it is possible to impute scopophilic fascination in both these categories of male supervision of women's reading as there is always, ever-present, as in the association between women and mirrors, the possibility of the fall, or misstep, from the ideal of womanhood reflected by male hegemony.

A vigorous debate about the 'disease' of reading was conducted chiefly in Victorian periodicals, and was at its height in the year 1885-86. According to Kelly J. Mays, 'bad'

---

<sup>105a</sup>(G)old for Charity; blue for Faith; grey for Prudence; green for Hope; white for Temperance; and red for Fortitude." (Flint, 1993, p. 17)

<sup>106</sup>Flint, 1993, p. 322.

reading habits were identified as being characteristic of women in particular, and many of the articles stress the dichotomy between the corporeal and the cerebral.<sup>107</sup> Not only was desultory reading anathematized because it distracted a woman's attention away from her family duties, but, as Mays indicates, contemporaneous critiques likening the habits of "omnivorous" reading to a disease or to uncontrollable appetite also reduce that reader to a state of nature and base instinct very far removed from the sense of rationality and civilization prized by Victorian manhood. Indeed, the fact that the 'guilt' of reading the 'wrong' type of books was written on the female body draws inevitable parallels with the metaphor of disease which was applied to the figures of the prostitute and the fallen woman and which fuelled both the Contagious Diseases debate and that about female indigency, redundancy, and emigration.

According to one early nineteenth-century advice book for women, the female disease of reading unsuitable material can be remedied by the regular ingestion of "improving books" as a form of beneficial nostrum or medicine, promising a healthy soul, and innocence, virtue, and a reward in the hereafter:

To every woman, whether single or married, *the habit of regularly allotting to improving books a portion of each day*, and as far as may be practicable, at stated hours, cannot be too strongly recommended. I use the term *improving* in a large sense, as comprehending all writings which may contribute to her virtue, her usefulness, her instruction, and her innocent satisfaction; to her happiness in this world and in the next.<sup>108</sup>

On the other hand, the same advice book expresses the 'wrong' type of reading in sexually coded terms, as a bodily indulgence, as a debilitating and insatiable habit leading to grossness of appetite, and even as a secretly corrupting passion:

...To indulge in the practice of reading novels is, in several other particulars, liable to produce mischievous effects. ...the perusal of one publication of this class leads, with much more frequency than is the case with respect to works of other kinds, ...to the speedy perusal of another. Thus a habit is formed, at first, of limited indulgence, but that is continually found more formidable and more encroaching. The appetite becomes too keen to be denied: and in proportion as it is more urgent, grows less nice and select in its fare. ...The palate is vitiated or made dull. ...Hence the mind is secretly corrupted. Let it be observed too, that in exact correspondence with the increase of a passion for reading novels, an aversion to reading of a more improving nature will gather strength.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup>Mays, Kelly J: 'Reading and Victorian Periodicals', in (eds.) Jordan, John O, & Robert L. Patten: *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 166.

<sup>108</sup>Anon: *The New Female Instructor: Or, Young Woman's Guide to Domestic Happiness*, Rosters, London, 1988, p. 46; first published by Thomas Kelly, London, 1834. Author's italics.

<sup>109</sup>Anon, 1834, p. 48.



The anonymous writer points to approved genres, including “an habitual study of the Holy Scriptures” and the study of history, biography and poetry, but warns against novels, arguing that although some “novels and romances ...favour the interests of morality”, it is hard to select “a very few ...which are not liable to the disgraceful charge of being occasionally contaminated by incidents and passages unfit to be presented to the reader”.<sup>110</sup> The phrase “novels and romances” was used, in the eighteenth century in particular, as a general way of describing fiction, but towards the end of the century, as the novel began to supersede the romance as the popular fictional form and it became necessary to make clearer distinctions, Clara Reeve wrote:

The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things.  
- The novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written.<sup>111</sup>

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, therefore, the novel was already considered to be a representation of ‘reality’, and ‘the romance’, which had evolved through various incarnations including medieval courtly or quest literature, the Elizabethan chivalric adventure, and more recently the Gothic novel, was held to reflect a more esoteric idealized possibility or to embody the fantastic.

Gillian Beer makes the distinction that whereas the novel is “preoccupied with representing and interpreting a known world”, the romance is concerned with “making apparent the hidden dreams of that world”.<sup>112</sup> However, during the Victorian period the increased focus upon the nature of society, the individual and the place of that individual in society, was enacted in the rise of the novel of social realism, but as the novel with its focus upon ‘reality’ was increasingly privileged, so attitudes militated against the romance. According to Beer, the latter “offended” Victorian high culture in two fundamental ways:

because it was not concerned with the actual: social conditions, ordinary people, the common chances of life. Then when emphasis upon the condition-of-England gave way in the late eighteen-fifties to a preoccupation with psychological realism, it offended because of its tendency to simplify and allegorize character, to offer tableaux instead of the processes of choosing.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup>Anon, 1834, pp. 47-8.

<sup>111</sup>Reeve, Clara: *The Progress of Romance*, I, W. Keymer, Colchester, 1785, p. 111

<sup>112</sup>Beer, Gillian: *The Romance*, Methuen & Co., London, 1970, p. 12.

<sup>113</sup>Beer, 1970, p. 69.

This literary dichotomy therefore appeared to substantiate other gender dichotomies positing woman as other, as corporeal rather than cerebral, as emotional rather than rational, and as liable to fall from grace. Not only was it believed that "certain texts might corrupt ...(the) innocent mind", but also that women were widely perceived to be "peculiarly susceptible to emotionally provocative material" of the sort presented in romances, and in novels which eschewed realism.<sup>114</sup> This had two important consequences: firstly, by according high-culture status to the novel of social realism, additional hegemonic control was exerted over the female mind by defining female sensibilities as inferior, but secondly, it also entailed that the mode of writing which was widely acknowledged as that of women writers, the romance, was defined as inferior.

As Mays has pointed out, "the debates about reading not only occurred simultaneously with ...redefinitions and redistributions of cultural authority but also served as an important site for larger struggles".<sup>115</sup> In particular, this redistribution of cultural authority can be seen in the exclusion of women's writing from the 'high culture' literary canon. George Eliot's famous critique of women's literature in the *Westminster Review* in 1856 might at first sight appear to be a betrayal of her own sex, but she concludes by laying responsibility for "silly novels by lady novelists" on a critical hegemonic discourse which persisted in condemning as 'unwomanly' those women who attempted to break out from the stereotypical mould it had cast for female writers:

By a peculiar thermometric adjustment, when a woman's talent is at zero, journalistic approbation is at the boiling pitch; when she attains mediocrity, it is already no more than summer heat; and if ever she reaches excellence, critical enthusiasm drops to the freezing point.<sup>116</sup>

The transience of female literary fame can be partially attributed to male control of the means of production, because rhetorical control over female reading and writing found physical embodiment in the censorship of material considered as unsuitable for 'the woman reader', which was operated by publishers with an eye on profits. Such was the purchasing power of Charles Edward Mudie's lending library, founded in 1852, and

---

<sup>114</sup>Flint, 1995, p. 22.

<sup>115</sup>Mays, 1995, p. 169.

<sup>116</sup>Eliot, George: 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', in Spender, Dale and Janet Todd (eds.): *Anthology of British Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, Pandora Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, p. 534; first published in *Westminster Review*, October 1856.

railway booksellers W.H. Smith's, that publishers conformed to their requirements for 'safe' literature.<sup>117</sup> According to Richard Altick, "Mudie thrived upon the role of the mid-Victorian Mrs Grundy: 'What will Mudie say?' was the invariable question that arose in publishers' offices when a new novel was under consideration".<sup>118</sup> Mudie's stranglehold over publishers, and by extension over writers, surfaced very publicly when George Moore, a writer whose first novel had been withdrawn from the shelves of Mudie's Select Library following complaints about its allegedly immoral content, and whose second novel was refused by Mudie, published a threepenny pamphlet, 'Literature at Nurse'. This diatribe against the "odious tyranny" of Mudie's censorship and virtual monopoly, which condemns Mudie as "(t)he British Matron" nurturing unworthy writers and immature works, underlines the way in which even male literary output was controlled with 'the woman reader' in view, and the natural evolution of literature was stifled.<sup>119</sup>

However, for female writers, any deviation from the stereotype set for the woman writer entailed that it was difficult to publish fiction which was in any way radical. The discourses of gender circulating at the time ensured, by mirroring constructions of the woman reader and woman writer, that these were deployed to control female literary output by defining as unnatural or deficient any material which deviated from the norms laid down for femininity. In order to circumvent these limitations, some women resorted to concealing their identity and gender by using a male pseudonym. This not only ensured that their work was more likely to be published, but also concealed the fact that the writer was more knowledgeable on matters sexual than was proper for a 'lady'.

The use of a male pseudonym also permitted some women to establish their reputations as 'high culture' novel writers whilst it was generally believed that they were male. Mary Ann Evans became 'George Eliot' in order to conceal her liaison with G.H.

---

<sup>117</sup>The cost of newly-published novels rose during the nineteenth century. Sir Walter Scott popularized the triple-decker novel with *Waverley* (1814), sold at one guinea for three volumes. By 1821 the cost of a triple-decker was one and a half guineas, a price which remained until the 1880s. Annual membership of a lending library was an affordable way of accessing new fiction: Mudie's subscription was one guinea.

<sup>118</sup>Altick, Richard: *The English Common Reader*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957, p. 296.

<sup>119</sup>Moore, George: 'A New Censorship of Literature', in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10.12.1884; reprinted in (ed.) Pierre Coustillas: *George Moore: Literature at Nurse, Or Circulating Morals: A Polemic on Victorian Censorship*, Harvester Press, Hassocks, England, 1976, pp. 17 & 16.

Lewes. Charlotte Brontë used the name 'Currer Bell' when she published *Jane Eyre* (1847), and there was widespread speculation about the author's true identity for some time; although the book was well received, one reviewer wrote "If *Jane Eyre* be the production of a woman, she must be a woman unsexed".<sup>120</sup> Prior to accepting Olive Schreiner's novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, Frederic Chapman tried to persuade the author to alter the plot to include the secret marriage of Lyndall, the female protagonist who gives birth to an illegitimate child, as he feared that otherwise "the British public would think it wicked, and Smiths, the railway booksellers, would not put it on their stalls!".<sup>121</sup> Schreiner refused to alter the plot; the book appeared initially under the male pseudonym 'Ralph Iron' and was a resounding success.

Overseas, colonial women writers were subject to the same constraints as their female counterparts at the metropolitan centre. The colonial publishing industry was slow to become fully established because London was long regarded as the cultural centre of the empire. Even in places where a local publishing infrastructure was in existence, however, literature written by women attempting to give the female perspective as emigrée or as second- or third-generation colonist was not favourably regarded by colonial publishers. Catherine Helen Spence and Miles Franklin, Australian writers whose works are discussed in Chapters Two and Three respectively, had tried to have their work published in Australia before sending their manuscripts to Britain where they were accepted: Spence's novel, *Clara Morison* (1854), was rejected in Australia on the grounds that only books on sport or politics would sell in the colony; nearly fifty years later Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* (1901) was turned down by Angus and Robertson, but accepted by Blackwood in Edinburgh.

Throughout the period under study colonial women writers sent their manuscripts to Britain for publication. Whilst this can, perhaps, be ascribed to the hegemony of the metropolis, and to the fact that they were 'writing back' to the cultural centre, their collective success in publishing an increasingly radical counter-discourse also suggests that they appear to have enjoyed an advantage over their British counterparts, because

<sup>120</sup> Anon: *North British Review*, August 1849; cited in Peters, Margot: *Unquiet Soul: A Biography of Charlotte Brontë*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1987, p. 255.

<sup>121</sup> Cited in First, Ruth & Ann Scott: *Olive Schreiner*, The Women's Press, London, 1989, p. 119.

the intense interest in emigration and imperialism, which prevailed throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, ensured that their work would be favoured by readers working for London publishing houses. This publishing advantage is, I believe, responsible for the speed with which the colonial feminists' counter-discourse in fiction gathered momentum, resulting in their early entry into the literary phase described by Showalter as 'feminist', discussed in Chapter Three. In the early stages of the genre, however, as I show in Chapter Two, colonial women writers sought to redress the distortions of the gendered frame by controverting hegemonic constructions of womanhood, especially of the emigrant female, and by disproving the myth of the 'new' colony as a utopia or El Dorado for women.

§§§

## Chapter Two

### Writing Home: Dramas of Exile

My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence, appeared to me imperfectly comprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man.<sup>1</sup>

§§§

For Catherine Helen Spence and Susanna Moodie, the two colonial women writers whose works are examined in this chapter, the very act of writing constituted a significant political intervention because, at a time when the benefits of imperial expansion were much vaunted, it was their means of challenging the patriarchal constructions of the emigrant woman and of empire in the public imagination, and mirroring a woman's viewpoint back to the metropolitan centre. In her study of colonial and postcolonial literature, Elleke Boehmer argues that the empire, and the "movements which emerged in opposition to empire", are "in the main a textual undertaking".<sup>2</sup> As she explains, the "textual exercise" of imperialism was carried out through a range of literatures, such as "political treatises, diaries, acts and edicts, administrative records and gazetteers, missionaries' reports, notebooks, memoirs, popular verse, government briefs, letters 'home' and letters back to settlers", as well as novels and tales of adventure. All of these, she maintains, functioned as a form of mapping of territory in which the eyes and imaginations of travellers interpreted 'new' countries through the signifiers and tropology of the old, by drawing upon familiar discourses and their codes.<sup>3</sup>

Familiarity with the Bible entailed that, more often than not, the new place of home was constructed imaginatively both in the minds of the settler/traveller and her/his readership at the metropolitan centre either in terms of Edenic paradise, or as chaotic and lawless wilderness. Consequently, the migrants envisioned themselves as benefiting from transformative and life-enhancing opportunities, or as being banished

---

<sup>1</sup>Barrett Browning, Elizabeth: 'Preface to the Edition of 1844', in *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, with Two Prose Essays*, Oxford University Press, London, 1916, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Boehmer, Elleke: *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Boehmer, 1995, p. 13.

into exile. Either way, 'writing home', and by this I mean both constructing a new sense of home *and* reflecting it back to the metropolis through literature, became a form of cultural accommodation and a means of discovering a new sense of the female self.

Arguably, because of their role as home-makers and guardians of the spiritual family hearth, the tasks of creating a home in alien circumstances, and writing about the experience, were more onerous for women writers. However, precisely because of their place at the heart of the home, the literature which results not only reveals much about confrontations with the wilderness and the formation of new societies, but it also exposes the cultural accretions of gender construction and even interrogates the nature of society itself. Patricia Klaus maintains that novels by female authors can be useful sociological tools for historians because they disclose the facts surrounding the real lives of women:

Novels operate on two basic levels: what the authors consciously set out to say through plot, theme, characters, and details; and what they unconsciously say through their work about their values and their relationship with society.<sup>4</sup>

In the course of my examination of women's colonial writing in this thesis, I wish to enlarge on this by arguing that one reason why a corpus of colonial women's writing evidencing cohesive properties evolved is because the women writers concerned felt impelled to write novels as those they read *failed* to reflect their own values and relationship with society.<sup>5</sup> Precisely because the project of empire and its imaginative construction remained largely within the remit of hegemonic discourse, colonial women writers saw it as important to relay their accounts of the female experience of exile to the metropolitan centre as this had been "imperfectly apprehended hitherto" and was "more expressible by a woman than a man".<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Klaus, Patricia Otto: 'Women in the Mirror: Using Novels to Study Victorian Women', in Kanner, Barbara (ed): *The Women of England: Interpretative Bibliographical Essays*, Mansell, London, 1980, p. 310.

<sup>5</sup>Asked why she became a writer, the Canadian author Carol Shields responded that she began to write because she could not find the sort of books that she wanted to read. (Postgraduate Conference on Canadian Literature, University of Leeds, 28.8.97)

<sup>6</sup>Barrett Browning, 1916, p. 102.

### Catherine Helen Spence: 'The right of wail'

Catherine Helen Spence's first novel, *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia during the Gold Fever*, was published in London in 1854 following its rejection by an Australian publisher.<sup>7</sup> Spence, who was born in Scotland, had emigrated to Adelaide with her family in 1839 when she was fourteen years old, and so the novel and its characters were drawn from personal experience. In the introduction to a recent collection of Spence's work, Helen Thomson notes that it is seen as an important historical document, especially in the way in which it relates to women's lives:

It has always been valued for its historical significance; the details of the ways people actually lived in 1851 and 1852 ...In fact *Clara Morison* offers more than historical interest. It provides the best depiction of domestic life of any novel about Australian life until the late nineteenth century when the works of 'Tasma', Mrs Campbell Praed and Ada Cambridge began to appear; and *Clara Morison* compares favourably with their best work.<sup>8</sup>

Spence had a particular reason for including a wealth of detail in her novel. As she explains in her autobiography, one of her reasons for writing it was to refute the impression created by Thackeray's *Punch* article on female emigrants, 'Waiting at the Station':

Another reason I had for writing the book. Thackeray had written about an emigrant vessel taking a lot of women to Australia, as if these were all to be gentlemen's wives - as if there was such a scarcity of educated women there, that anything wearing petticoats had the prospect of a great rise in position.<sup>9</sup>

*Clara Morison* is, therefore, a curious blend of domestic realism and early feminist polemic, a social purpose novel which contemplates the relationship of women to colonial society. However, its particular strength lies in the correlation it establishes between emigrant women's experiences of the colonial marriage market, their sexual and economic commodification, patriarchal power, and the imperial project.

The plot follows the unsteady progress of the eponymous Clara, a bookish Edinburgh orphan from a genteel background whose uncle declines to maintain her on the grounds

---

<sup>7</sup>A friend of Spence's, John Taylor, submitted the manuscript of *Clara Morison* in person to Charlotte Brontë's publishers, Smith, Elder and Co., but it was declined; subsequently J.W. Parker accepted it.

<sup>8</sup>Thomson, Helen (ed.): Introduction, *Catherine Helen Spence*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1987, pp. x-xi.

<sup>9</sup>Spence, Catherine Helen: *Catherine Helen Spence: An Autobiography*, W.K. Thomas & Co., Adelaide, 1910, p. 22; Spence had hoped to make some money from her book: "I had an idea that, as there was so much interest in Australia and its gold, I might get £100 for the novel". (Spence, 1910, p. 21) In fact, J.W. Parker agreed to pay £40 outright for it, but this amount was eventually cut by £10 as a fee for editing the novel. Thackeray's piece, published under the name 'Spec', is discussed in Chapter One of this thesis.



that she does not possess acceptable, womanly, social skills for the household of a gentleman. Believing female emigration to be the solution to Britain's problem of female superfluity and that Clara will benefit from improved marriage opportunities overseas, he sends her to Australia to make her way in the world alone. Clara's serendipitous discovery of relatives in Adelaide introduces to the plot her psychological counterpart in Margaret Elliott, a scholarly cousin who has rejected two suitors and who, being intent upon a career, has resolved never to marry. Although Spence explores a wide range of male and female character types, the centrality of both Margaret and Clara to the novel, and the fact of Clara's eventual marriage, indicate the pair as the complementary halves of Spence's idealized, female protagonist that combine to project and validate a range of possibilities for womankind.

More than halfway through *Clara Morison*, the central characters compare the merits of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *A Drama of Exile* (1843). Asked to choose between "Mrs. Browning's 'Eve'" and Milton's, Harris, a prospective suitor cast as a representative of male dogma, adheres strictly to the patriarchal line: "Nothing can surpass Milton's 'Eve,' so beautiful, so clinging, and so tender; with the idea that her husband has God to serve, while he stands in the place of God to her". In contrast, Spence's more open-minded hero, Charles Reginald, comes down firmly on the side of Barrett Browning and female independence of thought:

"But, ...such entire dependence of a wife upon her husband, though it would be well if men were angels, does not suit a world like ours. I think, in general, that a woman's conscience is less warped than her husband's; and that she has a great duty to perform in giving him unworldly counsel, and telling him how things look to her less sophisticated mind. Besides, I do not say that Mrs. Browning's 'Adam' is so fine as Milton's. Women describe women best; I hear great complaints of the monsters they make for men, but I dare say that we make as great blunders in describing them."<sup>10</sup>

This brief exchange auspicates Spence's protofeminist agenda. She privileges a woman writer's version of the male myth of female culpability and exile central to patriarchal discourse over that of one of the patriarchs of the literary canon, thereby engaging, like Barrett Browning herself, in an act of iconoclasm. The intertextual reference also functions at a deeper level. Barrett Browning's Eve, "schooled by sin to more humility"

---

<sup>10</sup>Spence, Catherine Helen: *Clara Morison*, in Thomson, 1987, p. 245; first published by J.W. Parker, London, 1854. (Hereafter given as Spence, *C.M.*)

than Adam, is constrained to silence having spoken "once to such bitter end".<sup>11</sup> Yet although in *A Drama of Exile* Eve bemoans this loss of her right "to wail", the poem *does* give voice to her woes.<sup>12</sup> Spence's allusion therefore focuses her novel on the female utterance from exile. Barrett Browning's Eve, and through her, womankind, is partially restored and accorded agency by Christ, who declares her "elect for evermore, First woman, wife, and mother". The final stanza moves towards the redemption of woman by concluding on the optimistic note, "EXILED, BUT NOT LOST".<sup>13</sup> The exchange therefore illuminates Spence's novel as an assertion of the right of women to counter male discourse. Not only does it centre the female perspective of the colonial experience, but in paralleling this to Eve's exile it also elevates it from a state of abasement.

Spence pursues the twin themes of wilderness and exile to explore female estrangement in a society where masculinist values prevail. The parallels between Clara's drama of exile and that of Barrett Browning's Eve forge the relationship between Clara's physical expulsion and the taint of guilt which adheres to women. Like Eve, both Clara and Margaret are regarded as deviant because they have dared to aspire to the acquisition of knowledge defined and guarded by patriarchy as its own preserve. Clara's feminized sister, Susan, has been retained in Edinburgh by their uncle as a useful social adjunct and "excellent governess for his family", as "her voice was exquisitely musical, her manners graceful and refined, and every accomplishment which she had cultivated was thoroughly acquired".<sup>14</sup> In contrast, Clara is unemployable; she is regarded as "singularly destitute of accomplishments for an Edinburgh girl of the nineteenth century" because her education is believed to have defeminized her.<sup>15</sup>

She neither played nor sung, nor drew, but she read aloud with exquisite taste; her memory was stored with old ballads and new poems; she understood French, and was familiar with its literature, but could not speak the language; she could write short-hand, and construe Caesar's Commentaries; she played whist and backgammon remarkably well, but she hated crochet and despised worsted work. In her father's lifetime, Clara had been the general referee at home on all miscellaneous subjects. She knew what book such a thing was in, what part of the book, and almost at what page. But alas! No

---

<sup>11</sup>Barrett Browning, 1916, p. 121.

<sup>12</sup>Barrett Browning, 1916, p. 122.

<sup>13</sup>Barrett Browning, 1916, pp. 131 & 137.

<sup>14</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 44.

one cared now for such accomplishments.<sup>16</sup>

In Australia, Clara's education does meet with approval, but it is significant that at first it is mainly other women, rather than men, who instantly recognize it as being of value in the colony. Margaret, described by the reliable Minnie Hodges as "the genius of the family" and "the very cleverest girl I know", continues her Latin studies with Clara, who "knew just about as much as herself", whilst her more practical sister, Annie, expresses "a strong desire to learn short-hand" from Clara.<sup>17</sup>

Clara's experiences and those of the other female emigrants she meets, prove patriarchal expectations of well-paid employment for women in the colony to be unfounded. Prior to her departure, Clara's uncle believes that "Clara might get fifty or sixty pounds a-year, and take a good position in society besides" as a governess in Australia.<sup>18</sup> However, once there, Clara discovers that even twenty pounds a year is considered "an absurdly high salary for a nursery governess". Instead, she is offered "fifteen pounds a-year, board and washing (this last in moderation), for instructing Mrs Denfield's seven children", and the juxtaposition of "washing ...in moderation" and Mrs Denfield's immoderate number of children suggests the narrator's wry disapproval of the exploitation of female labour.<sup>19</sup> Even the sum of thirty pounds a year offered to Miss Withering, who, having satisfied Mrs Denfield's exacting demands, is engaged in Clara's stead, falls far short of Clara's uncle's expectations, and, much later, it is for this same rate of thirty pounds a year that Clara settles when she becomes companion and nursery governess to Mrs Beaufort's child.<sup>20</sup>

The discovery of gold and consequent inflationary rises in the cost of living, shortages of everyday necessities, and the departure of men to the diggings in search of ready fortunes, function as a counterpoint to the exploitation of female labour. The spectre of the indigent needlewoman is invoked as Clara learns that even if she were a "skilful sempstress" she would not earn enough to pay her board and lodgings of eighteen shillings per week.<sup>21</sup> Obligated to take a position as an inexperienced maid servant

---

<sup>16</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 124, 92, & 201.

<sup>18</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 55 & 56.

<sup>20</sup>See Chapter 1 of this thesis, f.n. 80, for comparative rates of pay for women in Britain.

<sup>21</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 66.

because it provides accommodation, she earns a meagre four shillings per week, a sum which rises to five shillings only when she has proved herself. Yet, in contrast, men who have been comparatively well-paid are abandoning their jobs for the gold fields, and the everyday commodities that they have provided hitherto are placed at a premium. Tradesmen who were earning "easily ten shillings a-day" are quitting, and the cost of firewood rises from fourteen shillings a load, to "five pounds ten".<sup>22</sup> Even the pay of an experienced female servant in Adelaide, reported to be "seven shillings a-week" all found, and enabling her to dress better than her mistress in "flounced muslin gown, satin visite, and drawn bonnet", cannot compare with this, or with the "twenty-seven shillings a-week, with board and lodging" commanded by Mrs Beaumont's farm manservant.<sup>23</sup> Australia might prove to be an Eldorado for men, but Spence's novel makes clear that this is not the case for women.

Nor is marriage the easy answer to female indigency suggested by hegemonic discourse because the scarcity of female employment opportunities and the low rates of pay force some women into marriage, often with disastrous consequences. Australia is a moral wilderness and Clara's choices are stark. She must decide between destitution, and a lowly paid job as a servant which, she is warned, will lead to loss of caste, and "will quite spoil (her) ...chance of getting well married", or, like her one-time cabin companion, Elizabeth Waterstone, risk accepting the first "handsome offer" of marriage made to her.<sup>24</sup> Even in marriage, women are commodified and exploited. The case of one female emigrant, Miss Ker, who arrived, like Clara, both jobless and friendless, stands as a warning to others:

"Miss Ker, poor girl! she met a wretched fate. She married a man whom she knew nothing about; but, poor little thing, she had no home, and could not get a situation. This man had a good deal of property; she was pretty and inexperienced, and thought anything that would give her shelter would be comparative happiness. He had a shocking temper, and was very unsteady; but that was not the worst of it, for about six months after he married Miss Ker, he went on some pretext to Sydney; and shortly afterwards, his wife and four children came out to Adelaide to join him. Of course the true wife took possession of all his property here, and poor Miss Ker was left penniless with a sickly baby, and was forced to apply to the Destitute Board. She gets rations from public charity in this way, and takes in plain sewing; but her constitution is quite broken up, and the doctor says she cannot live over another winter. Girls should be

---

<sup>22</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 379.

<sup>23</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 42 & 323. According to Susan Magarey, "Mrs. Handy's Jane was well-paid. The average wage for female domestic servants was £10 to £20 a year with board and lodging". *Clara Morison*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, S. Australia, 1994, p. 275 n.

<sup>24</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 67 & 82.

very careful who they marry in a place like this, for there are many men who have a wife in each of these colonies, besides one in England."<sup>25</sup>

The disclosure that bigamy is rife in Australia evokes hollow echoes of Thackeray's phrase, "Australian sultan", and suggests that the much-paraded colonial marriage market is nothing better than prostitution. Miss Ker has, in consequence, become the archetypal fallen woman, and her social death is followed rapidly by her physical death, and that of her child.

Narratorial disapproval is not just reserved for men who exploit women, but it is also extended to women who exploit men, and to those of both genders who exploit Australia itself, expecting rich rewards without making any positive contribution. Indeed, the narrative's most scathing attacks are aimed against pretensions to fortune and power based on the snobberies and social class awareness of the metropolis. Reginald's English fiancée, Julia Marston, has high-flown aspirations for a glittering society life in Australia, and sends him plans for a grand house so that he "may get up something like it" as their marital home.<sup>26</sup> Yet, in the end, she refuses to leave England to "live as miserably as people do in Australia", claiming that she "cannot learn to wash dishes and scrub floors".<sup>27</sup> Her marriage to Dent seems apposite as it is one of mutual exploitation; having made his fortune in Australia, he has abandoned that country to return to England "hoping to obtain a handsome, accomplished English wife".<sup>28</sup> In contrast, the novel's resolution, with the marriage of the hardworking Reginald to the modest and resourceful Clara, suggests that a strong work ethic is central to the success of the new colony.

Despite the book's underlying moral and social agenda, it is relieved of didacticism by the wide range of almost Dickensian characters which people it, and by Spence's deft ironic touch. When Clara's uncle decides to send her away, his concern is not for his niece, but for the effect that the decision might have on his public persona:

Mr Morison had been sitting in his study for half an hour one morning, neither reading nor writing, but apparently settling the pros and cons of some new resolution which he

---

<sup>25</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 159.

<sup>26</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 153.

<sup>28</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 149.

had just formed, or perhaps trying to make it appear as graceful as it was convenient.<sup>29</sup>

This scene is recalled later in the novel, when Spence causes Margaret to remark of her uncle's action, "There is very little generosity among those respectable people!"<sup>30</sup> The word "respectable" reverberates with ironic overtones, reminding the reader that Morison's brand of respectability is representative of a cold-hearted patriarchy which fails to value its womenfolk, but condemns them as surplus to requirement, and transports them to the far side of the globe.

The imperialist values of the metropolitan centre, and those of fortune-hunting women who emigrate in pursuit of rich husbands, are exposed as identical and both are shown to be out of place in the new colony. The social affectations of the aptly-named Miss Withering, a comically-drawn female counterpart of Mr Morison, are ridiculed by established residents of Adelaide. On her arrival in Australia, and making no secret of her belief in her own superiority and her haughty disdain for all things Australian, she pronounces, "I was born to rule and cannot stoop to my inferiors. A master-mind like mine was not made 'to chronicle small beer'"<sup>31</sup> Yet she is an anachronism representing the archaic values of the old country: her favourite reading material is a collection of "the driest chips of history", and she is privately known by the soubriquet, the "Griffin", which suggests her, on the one hand, as a grotesque beast already in a state of extinction, and on the other, as a raw imperialist.<sup>32</sup> Miss Withering, who "makes no secret of her real love money", has launched herself on the colonial marriage market, and her financial and social expectations of marriage are high:

"I have quite made up my mind to remain single unless I could marry a gentleman worth at least eighteen hundred a year - and even then I think I should be thrown away upon such specimens as I have yet seen."<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 178.

<sup>31</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 92. 'To chronicle small beer' - to note down facts of no significance whatsoever.

<sup>32</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 95; in heraldry, the griffin is figured as a winged, hybrid monster with an eagle-like head and the body of a lion. For her readers' benefit, Spence contextualises the word "Griffin": "I think I know now why newcomers are called Griffins in India". (Spence, *C.M.*, p. 120) According to *Hobson-Jobson: The Anglo-Indian Dictionary*, a Griffin is: "One newly arrived in India, and unaccustomed to Indian ways and peculiarities; a Johnny Newcome". Its likely derivation is from "an early name for a Welshman, apparently a corruption of *Griffith*. The word may have been used abroad for a raw Welshman, and thus acquired its present sense". (Yule, Henry & A.C. Burnell: *Hobson-Jobson: The Anglo-Indian Dictionary*, Wordsworth Editions, Ware, 1996; first published by J. Murray, London, 1886)

<sup>33</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 222 & 133.

Described by one character as "an insufferable incubus", her true colours are confirmed following her marriage to Mr Macnab when she consistently refuses to undertake her share of the work in his drapery store and makes "insatiable" demands on his money and time.<sup>34</sup>

Yet although Spence depicts Australia as a moral wilderness, paradoxically, she also envisages it as a potential utopia which can only be fully realized through the unreserved commitment of self to the country by the right kind of settler, and by abandoning the social prejudices of the metropolis. Against her portrayal of Miss Marston, Miss Withering, and Mr Dent as unsuitable immigrants, is balanced a range of paradigmatic characters who are selfless, hardworking, self-sufficient, and adaptable, but above all, capable of transcending culturally delineated class and gender roles so that equality becomes the watchword for the new colony. As Margaret observes: "I have always thought that such a family as ours forms a valuable element in colonial society; we came here not to make our fortunes and leave the colony forthwith, but to grow up and settle in it".<sup>35</sup> Although the nucleus of ideal colonists enumerated by Spence extends beyond the Elliott family to include certain members of the squattocracy, Clara and her spiritual other half, Margaret Elliot, are the key representatives of the prototypical female, whilst Charles Reginald and Gilbert Elliot embody the qualities for the male.

For each of these, whether male or female, natural humility enables the undertaking of work in variety of occupations. Clara learns the menial chores of a domestic servant without losing caste, and tackles the normally gendered work of mending a fence, writing sermons, directing the harrowing, and glazing windows. Likewise, all the Elliots discover they can cope without the supporting skills of the opposite gender. In the period following the male exodus from Adelaide in search of gold, the sisters, who already housekeep without servants, become even more self-sufficient in the absence of their male protectors. At the gold fields, their brothers are also obliged to shift for themselves and they learn to cook, launder, and sew. In consequence, misconceptions about gender roles are banished and, in particular, the men's "conceited idea that all

---

<sup>34</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 219 & 406.

<sup>35</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 395.

women's work was easy, and could be done by instinct".<sup>36</sup> Like Barrett Browning's *A Drama of Exile*, therefore, *Clara Morison* establishes the value of female roles and recognizes women's contribution to society.

Occasionally, Spence's idealism appears to be at odds with the governing trope of Australia as both literal and moral wilderness, and this leads to sententious justification of her ideology. On the one hand, the country itself is figured as licentious and as menacing to women. When Clara accepts employment at a remote farmhouse in the bush, it turns out to be a double form of exile perpetuating woman's mythic fall from Eden. Already ejected from her homeland, she is further cut off from the town and enjoyment of family and friends, finding herself marooned in the wilderness with the predatory Beaumont and his friends following his wife's death. This "doubtful position", attracts the taint of female sexual transgression rendering her the subject of "a pretty tale among the villagers hereabouts", and threatening to make her a permanent social outcast by indelibly staining her reputation.<sup>37</sup> The bush farmhouse therefore comes to represent Australia in microcosm as a brutish phallocracy where the sexual and economic exploitation of emigrant women like Clara and Miss Ker is taken for granted, and even condoned.

On the other hand, whilst propounding her wilderness theme, Spence also insists that Australian society is cultured. At the heart of the bush itself, at the farmhouse, Clara has access to recent reading material in "a lot of new 'Punches'".<sup>38</sup> However, it becomes apparent that it is the central idealized characters who represent culture: whereas the men at the farmhouse "just looked at the woodcuts", Clara reads "one of those serious articles which are sometimes to be found in the witty periodical".<sup>39</sup> The conflictual nature of Spence's central trope can therefore be rationalized in light of her dual agenda: her utopian vision for Australia and her determination to refute Thackeray's description of female emigrants flocking to marry there, "as if there was such a scarcity of educated women there, that anything wearing petticoats had the prospect of a great rise in position".

---

<sup>36</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 232.

<sup>37</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 365 & 374.

<sup>38</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 347.

<sup>39</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 347.



Although Frederick Sinnett, an early critic, appears to have missed the point of Spence's frequent, and somewhat self-conscious, literary allusions, as he jokes about the "vigorous and sustained battery of references", those characters whom she represents as the prototypes for her utopian society are portrayed as well educated, culturally aware, and up to date with the latest books at a time when these had to be shipped from the metropolis.<sup>40</sup> Whilst Miss Withering's interest in "the driest chips of history" reveals a stultified intellect, Charles Reginald and Clara's reading shows a shared interest in contemporary issues. Asked by Clara whether the latest books are available in the colony, Reginald replies:

"I get tired sometimes of the mighty dead, and like to hold communion with the delightful living. I get out the newest works of Dickens, Bulwer, and Thackeray. Have you seen the end of 'Pendennis', Miss Morison?"

As Thackeray's *The History of Pendennis* was published monthly from 1848 to 1850, and Spence places Clara's arrival in the first quarter of 1851, it is tempting to read Reginald's mention of "'the delightful living'" in relation to Thackeray and *Pendennis*, and Clara's response, "It had not come out when I left home ...and I was very anxious to know how it was to wind up", as validating Clara's status and that of certain colonists as cultured, and as a pointed riposte to Thackeray himself for the reductive impression of both British and Australian women he gives in 'Waiting at the Station'.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, one of Spence's prime foci in the novel is female intellectual worth, which she explores through the Clara/Margaret dyad. Although both women are intelligent and well-educated, their outlooks on hegemonic discourse differ. Many of Clara's accomplishments are imitative of male achievement: she can quote Carlyle, recite

---

<sup>40</sup>Sinnett wrote: "In the boarding house Clara and ourselves make the acquaintance of ... the hero - one Mr. Reginald an up-country squatter who begins talking modern literature, and displaying a highly cultivated mind with a promptitude and pertinacity frightful to contemplate. Clara, however, regarded Mr. Reginald in a more favourable light than we did on first making his acquaintance, inasmuch that an hour's vigorous and sustained battery of references to Carlyle, Thackeray, Dickens, Scott, Byron and others, made a breach in her heart which never closes again until the end of the book". Despite this, Sinnett did evidently approve of the novel as he declared it, "decidedly the best Australian novel that we have met with". (cited in Susan Magarey's introduction to the facsimile edition of *Clara Morison*, 1994, pp. vii & v)

<sup>41</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 26-7. Spence builds up a precise chronology for *Clara Morison*; Clara sails from Edinburgh "late in the autumn of 1850" and the conversation with Charles Reginald takes place very soon after her arrival in Adelaide, "toward the end of an Australian summer". The action of the novel therefore commences early in 1851. (Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 8 & 17) "Bulwer" is Edward George Earle Lytton, 1st Baron Lytton (1803-73), a prolific author whose novel *Harold, the last of the Saxons* (1848) and whose epic verse *King Arthur* (1848-9) are closest in date to the action in *Clara Morison*. Works by Charles Dickens published at around the same time are *Dombey and Son* (1848), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), and his periodical, *Household Words* (1850 onwards).

Tennyson's long poems from memory, and is familiar with the work of "a Mrs Dobson who translated Petrarch beautifully".<sup>42</sup> Even her sermons and her poem, 'Lords of Creation', a scathing deprecation of women's circumscription under patriarchy, are produced covertly, their merit appreciated by Reginald alone, thereby suggesting that she is unable to resist fully the effects of female acculturation.<sup>43</sup>

In contrast, Margaret functions as the novel's oppositional female voice, angry, like Barrett Browning's Eve, at the suppression of the female outcast's "right to wail" at the gates of phallogocentric privilege. Recognizing that society pressurises women to marry, as "old maids are laughed at here as elsewhere", or to become governesses, she resists, because, as she notes, compliance with cultural expectations by undertaking either is a form of prostitution which requires both the physical and intellectual surrender of the female self and results in the silencing of the female subject:

"My mind is strong when it is employed on suitable objects; but I could not bring myself to take a situation, even as a governess, in the best family in South Australia. I must and will speak out my mind wherever I am.

...I cannot bear the idea of selling my time, my mind, my identical self, for so much a-year. I think I could get a situation if I tried; but though it would be very proper in present circumstances, I cannot bring my mind to such a thing."<sup>44</sup>

*Clara Morison*, through Spence's characterization of Margaret, demonstrates a brand of pragmatic protofeminism which foreshadows the work of her literary successors by simultaneously interrogating colonial governance, as it is conducted at the metropolitan centre, and women's circumscription under patriarchy. Whereas Clara represents, as Margaret herself recognizes, women for whom marriage is a "vocation", Margaret's vision, and hence her own vocation, is not just the amelioration of conditions in Australia, but also the devolution of power from London to the colony, and from male to female, in order to establish the ideal society.<sup>45</sup> Just as the characters of Margaret and Clara embody female potential, Margaret's brother, Gilbert, represents the male obverse of Margaret, standing for what Margaret might have become in the absence of the culturally constructed restrictions on women which exclude her from playing a full

---

<sup>42</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 52.

<sup>43</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 122.

<sup>44</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, pp. 214 & 213.

<sup>45</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 214.

part in shaping the new nation. The novel closes with Margaret's prognostications for the colony, and her exhortation to him to act as her proxy in order to achieve her ideals:

"I think that the discovery of these gold-fields will throw us at once into a more advanced state; I do not mean of morals, but it will bring us improvements in arts and sciences: we shall have steam and railways; towns will grow suddenly into cities; population will increase at an unexampled rate; and not only diggers and speculators will come to our shores, but men of intellect and enterprise. The English government will find out that the surest way to keep her colonies, is to leave them very much to act for themselves. It was the want of patronage, more than the Stamp Act, that lost her America. And, Gilbert, we shall soon be an important nation; you must get into council by-and-bye, and help to clear away the cumbrous and expensive trappings of justice. It is likely that transportation to these colonies will soon be abolished; but the effect of so many criminals having been poured into them wholesale for so many years must be long felt in every part of Australia. If you can make any improvements in our criminal law - if you can make our prison discipline reformatory - if you can do something towards raising our moral standard of education, so that we may not sink in the scale of nations through having been deluged with thieves and pickpockets - you will have lived to a great and useful purpose. Yes, Gilbert, you must get into council, and I must live to see it."<sup>46</sup>

Significantly, despite Gilbert's privileged position by virtue of gender, he too is estranged from full membership of colonial society because imperial power is wielded from the metropolitan centre. As he establishes, this excludes local men from forging careers in the administration of the colony, and therefore from decision-making processes:

"We have no patronage in the colonies; even supposing I became a first-rate lawyer, as I could if I tried, should I ever have the chance of rising to the bench, or even of being advocate-general? I am aware that an equal amount of study in the colony would make a better colonial lawyer or colonial judge than the same study in England; but how few would believe this. Every office is filled by some needy hanger-on of Downing street; by second or third-rate middle-aged men, who never understand our wants, and never learn to care for our interests."<sup>47</sup>

Margaret and Gilbert's impassioned speeches, positioned for impact as they are at the close of a novel propounding the case for gender equality, invite the conclusion that mid nineteenth-century Australia presents the golden opportunity to create an egalitarian utopia. The idealized society which Spence envisions is autonomous and is one in which patronage and preferment are abandoned; it is also one in which all members, irrespective of gender or social class, are able to partake fully. Although her brand of feminism acknowledges the centrality of marriage to the formation of this

---

<sup>46</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 396.

<sup>47</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 395.

ideal society, it advocates freedom of choice for women and the abolition of culturally defined gender roles.

One of the most radical proposals of the novel, that women are suited to political governance of the colony, is endorsed by Margaret's clarity of vision for the future and her commitment to voice her opinions and her frustrations publicly. Not only would female contributions of this kind enable women to reap natural fulfilment in shaping society equal to the 'natural' role of wife and mother, Spence suggests, but society itself would also benefit from harnessing female talents and from adopting feminine, rather than masculine, values. Indeed, just as Margaret is shown as capable of adopting a role hitherto perceived as masculine, Spence's idealized male settler, Reginald, represents a feminized man who is a melding of the best of male and female characteristics. His unequivocal support for Barrett Browning's Eve, demonstrating confidence in female independence and "'a woman's conscience'", and his quiet anticipation of domestic bliss with Clara, are counterbalanced by compelling evidence of masculinity when he survives a near-drowning accident in the bush. Margaret and he therefore bring complementary qualities to the colony: men of his calibre, who have qualities of caring yet retain the strength and capability to adapt to the challenge of the bush, are those whose enlightened approach to female potentiality will release women to take their rightful place as fellow agents in the creation of Spence's utopian society.

**Susanna Moodie: 'The active spirit that lives in the tongue of woman'<sup>48</sup>**

Both superficially and more fundamentally, *Clara Morison* bears remarkable similarities to *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852), the work of Spence's Canadian contemporary, Susanna Moodie. At the simplest level, there are striking resemblances in the provenance of both books. Like Spence, Moodie had first-hand knowledge of female emigration, but whereas Spence had emigrated to Australia as a girl in her early teens, Moodie, who as one of the famous literary Strickland sisters had already become an established writer before her marriage, went to Canada in 1832 aged twenty-nine, with her husband and newly-born baby.<sup>49</sup> Like Spence, she sent her manuscript to

<sup>48</sup>Moodie, Susanna: *Roughing it in the Bush*, Virago, London, 1986, p. 129. (Hereafter given as Moodie, *R.i.B.*) First published Bentley, London, 1852.

<sup>49</sup>Susanna Moodie's sisters, Agnes and Elizabeth, published *Lives of the Queens of England*, amongst other biographies; her remaining sister, Catherine Parr Traill, also a Canadian pioneer, had, like Moodie Continued on next page...

London to be published, and she also shared Spence's purposes in publishing her book, both as a means of generating an income and furthering her career as a writer, and as a way of reflecting back to the metropolis and countering the distortions of emigration discourse.<sup>50</sup>

Critical approaches to Moodie's book have situated it in a variety of different genres. Carol Shields' appreciation of the work instances both its breadth and its elusive nature: "*Roughing it in the Bush* ... generously and disconcertingly embrace(s) elements of travel writing, the literary sketch, narrative fiction, meditation, factual material and poetry".<sup>51</sup> Paradoxically, the problems of locating this book in any one literary pigeonhole have also tended to limit an appreciation of its range and diversity. However, as I shall show, by reading *Roughing it in the Bush* at a different level, as the work of colonial protofeminist, it shares striking thematic similarities with *Clara Morison*.

Arguing that *Roughing it in the Bush* constitutes an example of travel writing, Janet Giltrow maintains that, "(i)n her rhetorical stance ...in Canada" Moodie is "a watchful visitor - a tourist a sightseer - and her observations are directed toward a European audience". According to Giltrow, travel writing is a bridge from a writer overseas to a 'home' audience to account for the writer's absence, and a means of coming to terms with feelings of alienation, with the true goal in this genre being "round trip travel", rather than the "quest theme" common to most literature:

To counteract feelings of anonymity and alienation, the travel writer can reassure himself of his continued membership in the community he left behind by becoming very pronounced indeed in his expression of native cultural attitudes and habits. Away from home, we perhaps most emphatically declare our national provenance and identity. ...travel narrative differs from literature posed on a quest theme, for its goal is its point

---

<sup>49</sup>Continued from previous page...

herself, begun her publishing career in England. Soon after Moodie and her husband joined the Trails in Canada, Catherine Parr Traill had published *The Backwoods of Canada: Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer; Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America* (1836), and she went on to write an advice book for settlers, *The Female Emigrant's Guide* (1854), which also appeared under the title *The Canadian Settler's Guide*, and a series of books on Canadian natural history. Prior to her marriage, as Susanna Strickland, Moodie wrote *Patriotic Songs* (1830) with her sister Agnes, and *Enthusiasm, and Other Poems* (1831).

<sup>50</sup>Like Spence, Moodie used a friend who was travelling to London to act as her intermediary with a publisher. The manuscript was submitted to Richard Bentley by John Bruce late in 1851 and published almost immediately.

<sup>51</sup>Shields, Carol: 'Afterword', in *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1989, p. 339, first published by Richard Bentley, London, 1853.

of departure. When the one-way journey of permanent emigration is the actual experience of the writer, but round-trip travel remains his ideal of a due course, his consequent art is often poignant with disappointment and unresolvable alienation.<sup>52</sup>

Yet Giltrow, and other critics who categorise *Roughing it in the Bush* as travel writing, overlook two key points. Firstly, although Moodie writes constantly of her homesickness for, and her love of, the British countryside, she also praises aspects of the Canadian landscape in equal measure, and the family's return to Britain is not mentioned as a possibility. Secondly, although the text does close with a point of departure, with the Moodie family leaving the bush to settle in the town of Belleville, it is clear that Moodie's quest, or goal, is to quit the bush itself. As in many of the works discussed in this thesis, one of the themes of *Roughing it in the Bush* is the female settler's quest for a permanent home. For Moodie the removal to Belleville signals the achievement of this goal and permits closure.

Viewing *Roughing it in the Bush* as an example of travel writing not only ignores central elements of the text and its history, but it also denies its significance in a colonial context. Gillian Whitlock contends that in colonial writing the literary sketch plays an important role, along with the short story, in what she calls the "patriation process" by enabling colonial societies to "shrug off the sense that all criteria of literary value and worth emerged from a European metropolis".<sup>53</sup> Thus the sketch, and its cousin the short story, constitute part of the process of literary separation between the values of the colony and those of the metropolis and assist in the evolution of new literatures. According to Whitlock, the sketch was an especially pliable medium which made it suitable as a colonial form, because, like journalism whence it originates, it "need not move towards the reconciliation or process of enlightenment which we associate with the short story". It therefore permitted writers to express colonial society "in a way which seemed to them authentic and indigenous, in a form incorporating oral traditions", and which enabled a distinct, local voice to emerge.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup>Giltrow, Janet: "'Painful Experience in a Distant Land': Mrs Moodie in Canada and Mrs Trollope in America", in *Mosaic*, 14:2, Spring 1981, pp. 133 and 132.

<sup>53</sup>Whitlock, Gillian: 'The Bush, the Barrack-Yard and the Clearing: "Colonial Realism" in the Sketches and Stories of Susanna Moodie, C.L.R. James and Henry Lawson', in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. XX, No. 1, 1985, p. 36.

<sup>54</sup>Whitlock, 1985, p. 37.

Whitlock's article focuses on Moodie's use of the literary sketch *per se*, rather than on Moodie's later adaptation of her own work for publication in book form. The opening chapters of *Roughing it in the Bush* were originally published as individual articles in Canada, in *The Literary Garland* and *The Victoria Magazine* from 1847 onwards, and were therefore intended for a Canadian audience. When Moodie decided to publish them in Britain in a collection, she rewrote these early sketches to appeal to the British market, and arranged them in a different order from that of their chronological publication in the magazines. As Alec Lucas describes, most of these sketches formed the bulk of the first volume, but the remainder, and some newly written ones, were put towards volume two. Her husband contributed three sketches, and both volumes were interspersed with stanzas of patriotic verse.<sup>55</sup> *Roughing it in the Bush* is therefore not merely a collection of sketches, but it is a work which is carefully structured. This factor, according to Lucas, is often overlooked, but "the sketches constitute an integral part of the book's formal and thematic plan". As Lucas points out, Moodie covers three main topics sequentially: "human beings in society, in nature, and as individuals", and the pattern she establishes in volume one, in relation to Canadian society, is repeated in volume two as she explores her own inner development, and comes to a new realization of self.<sup>56</sup>

Written ostensibly as an emigration advice book, *Roughing it in the Bush* is a first person narrative offering caution to potential emigrants, as well as interest and entertainment to a wider audience. It reflects the Moodie family's tribulations in the backwoods of Canada, where they unsuccessfully attempt to wrest a living from the land for many years, from the moment they disembark at Grosse Isle following their Atlantic crossing, to the moment they leave for the relative comfort of a permanent home in the town of Belleville. Despite, and perhaps because of, the picture of hardship it paints, it was an instant success which ran to many editions, and today it is

---

<sup>55</sup>*The Literary Garland* was launched by its founding editor, John Lovell, in Montreal in 1838, Moodie's first publication in it appeared in May 1839, and thereafter she was a regular contributor. She describes in *Roughing it in the Bush* how she submitted unsuccessfully to *The North American Review* before being accepted for publication by Lovell. Both Moodie and her husband, J.W. Dunbar Moodie, edited *The Victoria Magazine* on behalf of Joseph Wilson for one year from September 1847 to August 1848. Dunbar Moodie's sketches are not discussed in this thesis. (Ballstadt, Carl, Elizabeth Hopkins, & Michael Peterman: *Susanna Moodie: Letters of a Lifetime*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1985, p. 73)

<sup>56</sup>Lucas, Alec: 'The Function of the Sketches in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*', in (ed.) Lorraine McMullen: *Re(dis)covering our Foremothers*, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 1990, p. 149.

regarded as one of the founding classics of Canadian literature.<sup>57</sup> Its enduring charm derives from Moodie's exuberant and often extravagant style, from her forthright, acutely-observed cameo pen-portraits of her friends and wily neighbours, and the way in which she centres herself as heroine and prime mover. Above all, although it is autobiographical in origin, Moodie marshalls her sketches to achieve a discontinuous narrative with a compelling, almost novelistic, unity.

Like Spence, Moodie is concerned to address the metropolis from the periphery. The opening paragraph of the Introduction appears to be a justification of emigration, which she later describes as a "mania" or "infection": "(i)n most instances, emigration is a matter of necessity, not of choice ... (e)migration may, indeed, generally be regarded as an act of severe duty".<sup>58</sup> However, Moodie's language of duty and compulsion registers emigration as a course of action to be regarded as a last resort, and foreshadows the fact that, for her, it has been no sinecure. The book's audience and purpose become apparent in its closing lines with her dark warning addressed to would-be emigrants in Britain:

If these sketches should prove the means of deterring one family from sinking their property, and shipwrecking all their hopes, by going to reside in the backwoods of Canada, I shall consider myself amply repaid for revealing the secrets of the prison-house, and feel that I have not toiled and suffered in the wilderness in vain.<sup>59</sup>

Her language is direct and revelatory: the metaphor of shipwreck, and her pun on "sinking," foreground marooning and loss; the use of "reside" is at curious variance with her habitat, the backwoods, and echoes the tension between middle-class expectations and actuality running throughout the book; the phrase, "the secrets of the

<sup>57</sup>Bentley offered fifty pounds for the copyright but Bruce negotiated an additional advance of twenty pounds "on account of half profits"; the initial run of 2,250 copies, in January 1852, sold so well that, later that year, Moodie received a further fifty pounds; second and third editions followed in November 1852, and in 1854; Bentley editions sold 1,300 copies between October 1857 and June 1858. An unauthorized U.S. edition, edited for an American readership, and published by George Putnam, appeared in July 1852, but in the absence of international copyright law at this time, Moodie and Bentley did not benefit. Moodie wrote to Bentley in 1853: "*Roughing it in the Bush* keeps its popularity in the States. Several Americans have told me, that it sells nearly as well as Mrs Stowes *Uncle Tom* [sic]. What a pity that it is of no use to either of us in a remunerative point of view" (Ballstadt, Carl (ed.): Introduction, *Roughing it in the Bush*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa, 1988, Ballstadt *et al* 1985, pp. 104 & 136)

<sup>58</sup>In 1832, when the Moodies emigrated, "thousands and tens of thousands, for the space of three or four years, landed on these shores". (Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. xix & xv) Between 1815 and 1840 the total number of emigrants from the U.K. was around one million; 499,000 of these went to British North America, 417,000 to the U.S., and 58,000 to Australia; because of gold strikes in Australia, Canada was no longer the chief destination when *R.i.B.* was published in 1852; however, with 368,000 people emigrating during that year, emigration remained a popular topic. (Carrington, Charles E.: *The British Overseas: Exploits of a Nation of Shopkeepers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 501 & p. 502)

<sup>59</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 515.



prison-house", suggests incarceration and enforced exile, as well as the withholding of truth from would-be settlers. However, it is the juxtaposition of "suffer" and "wilderness" which is perhaps most significant, because in the course of *Roughing it in the Bush* Moodie, like Spence, seeks to subvert the myth propounding emigration as beneficial to women, by deploying the biblical story of woman's fall from Eden to express the isolation and despair of the female exile in the wilderness.

Moodie's expectations on arriving in Canada are high but are often confounded by the reality of her experience. As the emigrant ship progresses up the St. Lawrence she construes the passing scenery through the rapturous terms of high romanticism: it is "sublime"; she is "blinded with tears" by the "excess of beauty", overcome by "the surpassing grandeur of the scene that rose majestically before me ... Nature had lavished all her noblest features in producing that enchanting scene"; Canada is viewed from afar as "a perfect paradise". However, this is a landscape in which Nature does not work alone but in tandem with mankind, and Moodie's picture of Edenic fecundity and the land's great bounty reveals that man has instilled some order, with "low fertile shores, white houses, and neat churches", "orchards and white farmhouses", and "neat cottages"; the "green slopes are covered with flocks and herds"; the country even appears to be an Eldorado rich in minerals because the sun is shining on "slender spires and bright tin roofs ... like silver".<sup>60</sup>

Yet here, and elsewhere in the book, the harmonious pastoral sublime is exploded by chaos bursting in on it, both audibly and visibly, setting the pattern for Moodie's repeated swings between expectation and disillusion. On landfall at Grosse Isle, Moodie and her fellow passengers are confronted by an immigrant rabble whose noisy exchanges and lack of decorum confute the image of Canada as an Edenic place where man is in harmony with God and nature, suggesting it instead as a clamorous Babel, the locus of man's breach in his relationship with God through overweening arrogance and greed:

Never shall I forget the extraordinary spectacle that met our sight ... A crowd of many hundred Irish immigrants had been landed during the present and former day; and all this motley crew ... were employed in washing clothes, or spreading them out on the rocks and bushes to dry. ... The confusion of Babel was among them. ... We were

---

<sup>60</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, pp. 8 & 7.

literally stunned by the strife of tongues. I shrank, with feelings almost akin to fear, from hard-featured, sun-burnt harpies, as they elbowed rudely past me.

...The people who covered the island appeared perfectly destitute of shame, or even of a sense of common decency. Many were almost naked, still more but partially clothed. We turned in disgust from the revolting scene, but were unable to leave the spot until the captain had satisfied a noisy group of his own people, who were demanding a supply of ship's stores.<sup>61</sup>

The Grosse Isle incident neatly illustrates four interconnecting issues which recur in different forms throughout her book, and serve as the nuclei for her central themes. One immigrant jumps on a rock, brandishing a shillelagh, capering "like a wild goat from his native mountains", and shouting "Whurrah! my boys! ...Shure we'll all be jontlemen!"<sup>62</sup> For Moodie's middle-class sensibility, the upward social mobility of classes regarded in Britain at that time as the lower orders or residuum was not only a threat in terms of her personal status, but it also spelled more general social chaos and disorder. Secondly, although Moodie's fear of the "harpies" derives, as the word itself suggests, from her concerns about the contaminating effect of social disorder, it is also bound up with her continuing preoccupation with women's response to the liberating effect of the New World. As a soldier remarks to her husband, "We could, perhaps, manage the men; but the women, sir! - the women! Oh, sir!"<sup>63</sup> The third issue is closely associated with both of the former, and concerns the silencing of women and the lower orders. Moodie is acutely aware that the "vociferations" of the rabble are related to their release from the constraints of the British class system.<sup>64</sup> Later, in the bush, she discovers that her own ability to adapt is contingent upon the seizure of the word, and results in her liberation from the strictures of hegemonic discourse. Finally, as in *Clara Morison*, Eden and the wilderness exile are the ever-present obverse and reverse of the same coin. The paradisaical possibilities of the 'new' country are continually called into question both by the physical wilderness which surrounds the pioneers and by the spiritual wilderness within many of them.

Drawing on biblical tropology and the nineteenth-century "metonymic associations between filth and disease", and between the residuum and sewage, Moodie reflects the Canadian wilderness both as a state of moral malaise and as various states of physical

<sup>61</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.* pp. 10 & 11.

<sup>62</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.* p. 14.

<sup>63</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.* p. 14.

<sup>64</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.* p. 11.

malaise.<sup>65</sup> The fact that the country is beset by cholera is juxtaposed to a drowning incident she witnesses when the indifferent occupants of a small boat "actually sailed over the spot where he sank" without attempting to save an unfortunate sailor.<sup>66</sup> Life, it seems, is cheap in Canada. The physical infection which is rife also stands as a metaphor for the moral infection which has gripped the country. Quebec is a "plague-stricken city", and the opening of the sewers in Montreal, which "loaded the air with intolerable effluvia, more likely to produce than stay the course of the plague", mirrors the emigrant ships' discharge of their noxious emigrant cargoes at Grosse Isle.<sup>67</sup> That the cholera appears curable only by the mysterious Christ-like figure of Stephen Ayres, "a man sent from heaven", who is "not of the earth" but who manifests the "hand of God", merely serves to underline the fact that it is a plague of biblical significance and is symptomatic of a moral canker.<sup>68</sup>

Moodie uses the word "wilderness" in various ways, but even although it is often descriptive of the landscape and synonymous with forest, bush, backwoods and woods, her governing trope of postlapsarian exile and loss remains omnipresent. As in *Clara Morison*, the colony is simultaneously the place of abandonment or exile in the wilderness or a potential utopia. Like Spence, Moodie draws on the biblical projection of female guilt in the story of Eve's banishment to intensify the estrangement of the female emigrant: "Dear, dear England! Why was I forced by a stern necessity to leave you? What heinous crime had I committed, that I who adored you, should be torn from your sacred bosom, to pine out my joyless existence in a foreign clime".<sup>69</sup> Described in a rapturous, pantheistic panegyric, England becomes the Edenic bower Moodie has been forced to quit:

The glory of May was upon the earth - of an English May. The woods were bursting into leaf, the meadows and hedge-rows were flushed with flowers, and every grove and copsewood echoed to the warblings of birds and the humming of bees. To leave England at all was dreadful - to leave her at such a season was doubly so. ...Here annually, from year to year, I had renewed my friendship with the first primroses and violets, and listened with the untiring ear of love to the spring roundelay of the blackbird, whistled from among his bower of May blossoms. Here, I had discoursed sweet words to the tinkling brook, and learned from the melody of waters the music of

<sup>65</sup>Stallybrass, Peter & Allon White: *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Methuen, London, 1986, p. 131.

<sup>66</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 37.

<sup>67</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. 30 & 34.

<sup>68</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 35.

<sup>69</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 62.

natural sounds. In these beloved solitudes all the holy emotions which stir the human heart in its depths had been freely poured forth, and found a response in the harmonious voice of Nature, bearing aloft the choral song of earth to the throne of the Creator.<sup>70</sup>

Yet Moodie's representation of herself as a latter-day Eve shows that Canada itself holds paradisaical temptations. Despite the scenes of debauchery which so horrified her there, even Grosse Isle is figured as a newly-created land, unsullied by man, "a second Eden just emerged from the waters of chaos", with its luxuriant vegetation, its abundance of fruit, and its spiritual ambience:

beautiful evergreens, ...our favourite garden shrubs among these wildings of nature.  
...wild vines, that hung in graceful festoons from the topmost branches to the water's edge. ...It was a scene over which the spirit of peace might brood in silent adoration.<sup>71</sup>

Later, admiring the tempting fruit-hung orchards alongside the St. Lawrence, and having a great "partiality for apples", she is warned against touching them because of the cholera epidemic, by a "gentleman who ...had just recovered from the terrible disease". Yet, like Eve, she dismisses the warning with bravado, "I disregarded the well-meant advice".<sup>72</sup>

Paradoxically, the unsullied, prelapsarian potential of Canada contrasts with the social and moral disorder imported by some denizens of the bush, so that the country is at one and the same time both Eden and the postlapsarian wilderness:

The unpeopled wastes of Canada must present the same aspect to the new settler that the world did to our first parents after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden; all the sin which could defile the spot, or haunt it with the association of departed evil is concentrated in their own persons.<sup>73</sup>

It is, therefore, a variation of hell, with extremes of temperature to match, a repository for malefactors which abounds with pestilence of all kinds. The Moodies' faithful servant, John Monaghan, believes himself to be in "purgatory ...all the while".<sup>74</sup> Tom Wilson, a friend from England who emigrated to Canada shortly before them, suffers repeated attacks of ague, just as all the Moodies are to later, and complains ceaselessly of the "infernal buzzing" of the "mosquitoes and black flies in that infernal bush".<sup>75</sup> The lawlessness in Canada is such that, even at a time when Australia was being

---

<sup>70</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 61.

<sup>71</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. 17 & 12-13.

<sup>72</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 41.

<sup>73</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 251-2.

<sup>74</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 158.

<sup>75</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. 71 & 66.

peopled with convicts, he rails, “‘Ah! such a country! ...such rogues! It beats Australia hollow’”.<sup>76</sup>

The fall from grace in *Roughing it in the Bush* relates as much to materialism as it does to lawbreaking, and in the wilderness all ages of mankind are capable of demonstrating original sin in this regard, rather than original innocence. Moodie remarks darkly that in Canada “(t)he simplicity, the fond, confiding faith of childhood, is unknown”. Boys are “as able to drive a bargain and take advantage ...as the grown-up, world-hardened man”, and girls, too are equally exploitative, having “an acute perception of the advantages to be derived from wealth, and from keeping up a certain appearance in the world”.<sup>77</sup> Moodie’s neighbours in the backwoods are “semi-barbarous Yankee squatters”, as well as the appositely nicknamed reprobate, “Old Satan”, and his equally reprehensible daughter, “Miss Satan”, in whose vacant hut the Moodies are obliged to camp at first, and who are the skilled practitioners of the infamous ‘borrowing system’ to relieve newcomers of their possessions.<sup>78</sup> Yet in a comic passage typical of Moodie’s droll determination to foreground redeeming features even when under severest tribulation, Tom Wilson and the Moodies are able to turn the tables on ‘Old Satan’ when the ague-stricken Tom suddenly appears from the bed recess causing him to flee the house crying out “‘the devil! - the devil!’”.<sup>79</sup>

As in *Clara Morison*, Moodie’s critiques of the discourses of class and gender which hold sway in Britain become an implicit critique of the metropolis itself. Her exploration of her own changing attitudes in the course of *Roughing it in the Bush*, shows that the class condescensions of the old country are out of place and irrelevant in the new colony. Contrasting “the misery and pauperism of the lower classes in Great Britain” to Canada’s egalitarianism, she envisions the latter country as a new republic built on an ‘aristocracy of labour’ which is freed from the trammels of class-consciousness:

It is a glorious country for the labouring classes, for while blessed with health they are

<sup>76</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, p. 68; the transportation of convicts to New South Wales was abolished in 1840, and to Van Diemen’s Land in 1846; although *Roughing it in the Bush* was published in 1852, Tom Wilson’s conversation with the Moodies is given in the text as having taken place soon after their arrival in Canada in 1832.

<sup>77</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, p. 139.

<sup>78</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, pp. 212 & 92-3.

<sup>79</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, p. 114.

always certain of employment, and certain also to derive from it ample means of support for their families. An industrious, hard-working man in a few years is able to purchase from his savings a homestead of his own; and in process of time becomes one of the most important and prosperous class of settlers in Canada, her free and independent yeomen, who form the bones and sinews of this rising country, and from among whom she already begins to draw her senators, while their educated sons become the aristocrats of the rising generations.<sup>80</sup>

For Moodie, mankind's existence under the unremitting oppression of the class system is not only contrary to human nature, but it also results in class antagonisms:

The unnatural restraint which society imposes upon these people at home forces them to treat their more fortunate brethren with a servile deference which is repugnant to their feelings, and is thrust upon them by the dependent circumstances in which they are placed.<sup>81</sup>

She blames this "unnatural" downward "restraint" for the anarchic behaviour of newly arrived emigrants in Canada: "once [*they*] emigrate, the clog which fettered them is suddenly removed; they are free; and the dearest privilege of this freedom is to wreak upon their superiors the long-locked-up hatred of their hearts".<sup>82</sup>

Despite her libertarian, utopian vision for Canada, and her advocacy of the benefits of hard work, Moodie's attribution of her family's failure to prosper in the Canadian bush to social difference suggests an inability to rid herself entirely of vestigial beliefs in the superiority of her own class, as well as a concomitant belief that manual toil is for others. In a country where "(t)he serving class, comparatively speaking, is small, and admits of little competition", she claims that the Moodies' delicacy of upbringing places them at the mercy of those servants they are able to employ.<sup>83</sup> The cost of this is, she maintains, the difference between financial success and financial ruin. Whereas "the poor, industrious working man" is not only inured to inhospitable conditions and "hardships that would kill a domesticated animal", but also requires merely "the common necessities of life", "(t)he gentleman can neither work so hard, live so coarsely, nor endure so many privations" and therefore "he expends his little means in hiring labour, which his bush-farm can never repay".<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. 224-5.

<sup>81</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 213.

<sup>82</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 214.

<sup>83</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 216.

<sup>84</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 515.

Nevertheless, *Roughing it in the Bush* charts a marked change in Moodie's attitudes towards those she dubs the "labouring classes".<sup>85</sup> Criticized at first for not eating with her "helps", her early hauteur gives way by the close of the book to understanding tempered with respect.<sup>86</sup> Key to this change is her growing appreciation of the dignity of labour, especially female labour, through her own triple marginalization, by geographic location, by gender, and by the direst extreme of poverty. Unable to afford a household of servants, Moodie is obliged to abandon middle-class aspirations and affectations in order "to learn and practise all the menial employments which are necessary in a good settler's wife".<sup>87</sup> She takes pride in her newly acquired skills at "field-labour" and cultivation, stating "I have contemplated a well-hoed ridge of potatoes on that bush farm, with as much delight as in years long past I had experienced in examining a fine painting in some well-appointed drawing-room".<sup>88</sup> Her success at fishing encourages her children to name the lake "Mamma's Pantry"; she catches and cooks squirrels along with other "such 'small deer'", and teaches herself to make use of the humblest ingredients in order to survive: she makes bread without yeast, serves dandelion leaves as a vegetable, and evolves a recipe for making *ersatz* coffee from its roots.<sup>89</sup>

Like *Clara Morison*, *Roughing it in the Bush* appears to present contradictory views of the wilderness. On the one hand, Moodie casts herself as a latter-day Eve in exile, yet, on the other hand, her experiences in the bush can be seen as transformatory, and even as personally liberating. On finally leaving the bush for a more comfortable life in town, she concedes:

You must become poor yourself before you can fully appreciate the good qualities of the poor - before you can sympathise with them, and fully recognise them as your brethren in the flesh. Their benevolence to each other, exercised amidst want and privation, as far surpasses the munificence of the rich towards them, as the exalted philanthropy of Christ and his disciples does the Christianity of the present day. The rich man gives from his abundance; the poor man shares with a distressed comrade his all.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 234.

<sup>86</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 224.

<sup>87</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. 216 & 296.

<sup>88</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. 341 & 342.

<sup>89</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 346.

<sup>90</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 427.

Her early expectations of the transformative powers of the wilderness, expressed in the pantheistic terms of romanticism from the ship on the St. Lawrence, have, therefore, been at least partially fulfilled through the development of her own moral values.

More generally, however, Moodie's episodic dramas of exile in the bush suggest that a sojourn in the wilderness can also release women from silent compliance with cultural constructions of womanhood. Like Spence, she represents the bush as a phallogocentric domain where women must struggle to be heard. Indeed, by focusing on the value of women's work, and on women's seizure of language, Moodie indicates that women may use their experiences to effect their own liberation. Quite literally, language is shown to be under the control of men. Malcolm, "The Little Stumpy Man", tries to silence the maidservant by threatening to treat her just as a "scolding woman" had been by "Indians" in South America: "(t)hey ...cut out her tongue, and nailed it to the door, by way of a knocker; and he thought that all women who could not keep a civil tongue in their head should be served in the same manner".<sup>91</sup> Tellingly, one chapter juxtaposes an incident in which Uncle Joe, one of Moodie's unruly neighbours, refuses to accede to her demands that he chastise his son for swearing, to the discovery by Moodie of a tombstone epitaph which appears to stand as a monument to the demise of female speech: "Sacred to the memory of *Silence* Sharman, the beloved wife of Asa Sharman". Whilst Uncle Joe upholds the right of men to speak out as they wish, maintaining "a little swearing is manly", the name of the deceased causes Moodie to muse on the silencing of women:

Was the woman deaf and dumb, or did her friends hope by bestowing upon her such an impossible name to still the voice of Nature, and check, by admonitory appellative, the active spirit that lives in the tongue of woman?<sup>92</sup>

One of the chief differences between Moodie and those of her female neighbours who have been resident in the wilderness for some time, is their use of language. Not only have these women adopted male language for their own use, but they also use their quick-witted facility for speech as a weapon to achieve ascendancy over Moodie. Chastising Betty Fye for swearing, Moodie earns the rebuke, "(e)verybody swears in this country".<sup>93</sup> As a skilled practitioner of the 'borrowing system', Fye successfully

<sup>91</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, p. 365.

<sup>92</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, pp. 128-9 & 143; Moodie's italics.

<sup>93</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, p. 96.



acquires coveted goods by outwitting Moodie in repeated bouts of verbal jousting. It is only when Moodie learns to respond in kind that she finally outsmarts Fye and liberates herself from the ongoing battle. Fittingly, Moodie's victory comes when she caps Fye's attempt to bend the scriptures to her own end, "It is more blessed to give than to receive", with her own riposte, "The wicked borroweth and payeth not". Although Moodie records that Fye "lifted up her voice and cursed me, using some of the big oaths temporarily discarded for *conscience* sake", Moodie has won, for she "never looked upon her face again".<sup>94</sup>

Whereas *Clara Morison* espouses women's rights by claiming that marriage is not the only career for women, and Spence subsequently aligned herself publicly with the fight for women's suffrage, Moodie's approach to gender politics is ambivalent. *Roughing it in the Bush* is a woman-centred text which celebrates female achievement through its portrayal of Moodie's own developing capability in a wilderness largely peopled by ruffians of both genders. Able or heroic men are strangely absent, Dunbar Moodie is frequently away from home leaving Moodie to cope alone, and the male characters are, in the main, workshy rogues like "Old Satan", "The Little Stumpy Man", and "Old Wittals", whose greed is only matched by their selfishness. There are even flaws amongst men from the officer class to which the Moodies themselves belong. Having failed to pay the faithful Jenny who has kept house for him and his wife through thick and thin, and having "converted into whiskey" his grant of eight hundred acres, Captain N\_\_ has decamped to the United States, abandoning wife and children in penury at the very heart of the bush.<sup>95</sup>

In the course of the text, and in contrast to the workshy, Moodie becomes the prime agent. Quite apart from the manual farm work she tackles, she survives two life-threatening outbreaks of fire: during the first she is paralysed with fear, and is saved only because of a sudden downpour; during the second, however, she takes charge in almost superhuman fashion, saving the children single-handedly, dragging out chests "which, under ordinary circumstances ...(she) could not have moved", and is later "reported to have done prodigies".<sup>96</sup> Similarly, an early chapter recounts the

<sup>94</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, p. 99.

<sup>95</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, p. 455.

<sup>96</sup>Moodie, *R.I.B.*, p. 391.

difficulties she has in even walking in the woods: whereas her sister who "was provided for her walk with Indian moccasins, which rendered her quite independent", Moodie "stumbled at every step"; yet by the close of the book Moodie is competent in the wilderness and able to penetrate it on foot, an arduous journey of "upwards of twenty miles", without food and in the depths of winter to bring aid to the abandoned Mrs N\_\_\_ and her children.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, so attuned to the bush has Moodie become that, on two separate occasions, she is able to save her own life by allowing her canoe drift with the current.

Yet her projection of herself as heroine, and of her dynamism in the bush, are at variance with her views on womanhood. In the year following the publication of *Roughing it in the Bush* she wrote to her publisher:

I have been reading the life of 'Margaret Fuller, Countess Ossoli.' It is an interesting record of a woman of great genius, though rather spoiled by its transcendentalism. Is not the womans' (*sic*) Rights movement, the most preposterous absurdity of the present day? If they would only let these ambitious masculines in petticoats, have their own way, the disease would soon cure itself; and the fair imbeciles regain their right senses and their proper position. Imagine a refined woman holding a plough, wielding the axe, or knocking down an ox. Faugh the idea is disgusting, worthy the wife of the old bug bear of our childhood, the giant Fee-faw-fum.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the fact that Moodie dissociates herself here from the women's rights movement, the inherent contradictions in this passage illuminate her stance on women in *Roughing it in the Bush*. Although she admires Margaret Fuller's "great genius", she decries the nascent feminist movement which Fuller so influenced through her writing.<sup>99</sup> Secondly, Moodie seems unclear about the movement's precise aims; although at this time there were claims for occupations previously regarded as the preserve of men to be opened up to women, she appears not to be aware that women's prime claims were for civil rights and equality before the law.<sup>100</sup> Curiously, she also

<sup>97</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 261 & 480.

<sup>98</sup>Letter from Moodie to her publisher, Richard Bentley, dated 30 December, 1853; in Ballstadt *et al*, 1985, p. 144.

<sup>99</sup>(Sarah) Margaret Fuller, Marchioness Ossoli (1810-1850), American feminist and critic who became known as the 'high priestess' of New England Transcendentalism, a movement which included Ralph Waldo Emerson amongst others; for a short time she edited its mouthpiece, *The Dial* (1840-1842). She is chiefly remembered for her feminist text, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), demanding equality for women.

<sup>100</sup>The Seneca Falls Declaration, described by some as the single most important document of the nineteenth-century American woman's movement, had been made on 19 July 1848 at a Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls. Based on the American Declaration of Independence, it asserts that "all men and women are equal", enumerates the civil rights from which women were excluded under patriarchy. Continued on next page...

seems oblivious to the fact that, according to her rationale, the manual work she writes of so proudly in *Roughing it in the Bush* places her in the same category as the giant's wife she anathematizes. Yet it is this reference to the incongruity of "a refined woman" undertaking manual labour which casts most light on Moodie's brand of feminism. As her debate on class and labour in *Roughing it in the Bush* shows, she is unable to dispel her self-conscious awareness of her own caste. Her representation of womanhood in the book, and even her vision for women in relation to the future of Canada, are therefore restricted by constructions of femininity contingent on class.

It also appears that Moodie's acclamation of Fuller was based on admiration for her intellectual ability as a writer, and of her writing career, rather than on a wholehearted embrace of all aspects of Fuller's feminism. This accords with Moodie's emphasis in *Roughing it in the Bush* on the appropriation of the word as the means of female liberation, and on the tensions between her protofeminism and her acculturation as a woman. An early chapter describes her ostracism by neighbouring women in the bush on account of her literary fame. Warned that "it would be better ...to lay by the pen, and betake [*herself*] ...to some more useful employment", she feels impelled to resort to the stereotypical role of ideal homemaker, making herself become "more diligent in cultivating every branch of domestic usefulness".<sup>101</sup> Yet Moodie's writing, like her seizure of the word to rebuff 'borrowers' like Betty Fye, becomes the means through which she gains control over her life. In her husband's absence in the militia she not only reduces their debts by writing for *The Literary Garland*, but she also challenges his authority by writing secretly to the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir George Arthur, to ask for help, an intervention which results in a permanent government post for Dunbar Moodie, and which effects her escape from the wilderness and restoration to the comparative civilization of the town:

---

<sup>100</sup>Continued from previous page...

and claims "to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce". Another Declaration made at around the same time, at Ohio and Worcester Woman's Rights Convention (1850), resolves "that all distinctions between men and women in regard to social, literary, pecuniary, religious or political customs and institutions, based on a distinction of sex, are contrary to the laws of Nature, are unjust, and destructive to the purity, elevation and progress in knowledge and goodness of the great human family, and ought to be at once and forever abolished". (cited in ed. Miriam Schneir: *The Vintage Book of Historical Feminism*, Vintage, London, 1996, pp. 77 & 82, and in Lerner, Gerda: *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993, p. 217)

<sup>101</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. 218 & 220.

The first secret I ever had from my husband was the writing of that letter; and proud and sensitive as he was, and averse to asking the least favour of the great, I was dreadfully afraid that the act I had just done would be displeasing to him.<sup>102</sup>

Although *Roughing it in the Bush* is recognized as a milestone in the history of Canadian literature, its relevance as a feminist text is rarely noted. It is apparent, however, that for Moodie writing is a political action commensurate with her class and status as a married woman. Northrop Frye has remarked that literature can be used in the same way as an axe in order to formulate "arguments with sharp cutting edges that will help to clarify one's view of the landscape".<sup>103</sup> Thus the pen, too, becomes an instrument of colonization and the means by which colonial writers penetrate the wilderness. Moodie's attack on the wilderness with her pen in *Roughing it in the Bush* also assists in giving the emigrant women she depicts, including herself, a voice, and makes her a significant early contributor to the corpus of colonial women's literature.

### The Literary Context

Whatever may be their use in civilized societies, mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action. That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior they would cease to enlarge. That serves to explain in part the necessity women so often are to men. ...For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgement, civilizing natives, making laws ...<sup>104</sup>

§§§

As the central thrust of my argument in this thesis is that, during the period 1850-1950, a cohesive body of colonial feminist writing emerged, and that this embodies some of the qualities of postcolonial literatures, it is, perhaps, helpful at this stage to explore these characteristics briefly. Stephen Slemon has pointed out that, "the question of the 'post-colonial' - is grounded in the overlapping of three competing research or critical fields, each of which carries a specific cultural location and history". One of these fields is based on what he calls "an outgrowth of what formerly were 'Commonwealth' literary studies", and is therefore defined largely by geographical and temporal

<sup>102</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 429; Sir George Arthur (1785-1854) was Governor of Van Diemen's Land 1823-36, of Upper Canada 1837-41, and of Bombay 1842-46.

<sup>103</sup>Frye, Northrop: Conclusion to (ed.) Carl Klinck: *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, Vol. II*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1965, p. 344; reprinted in Frye, Northrop: *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, Anansi Press, Toronto, 1971, p. 228.

<sup>104</sup>Woolf, Virginia: *A Room of One's Own*, in (ed.) Michèle Barrett: *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1993, p. 32-33; *A Room of One's Own* first published by The Hogarth Press, London, 1929.

location; the second is, he maintains, specifically related to subjectivity and cultural identity as it concerns "Third- and Fourth-World cultures, and ...black, and ethnic, and First-Nation constituencies dispersed within First-World terrain"; and the final field derives from the two originating fields which give way to "specific analyses of the discourse of colonialism (and neo-colonialism)," and to "the project of identifying the kinds of anti-colonialist resistance that can take place in literary writing".<sup>105</sup>

Postcolonial literatures can therefore be seen, on the one hand, as significant means of establishing cultural identity, and, on the other, as being analytical of imperialist or colonialist discourse, and even as contestatory in nature. In subsequent chapters I touch on the way in which colonial feminist writing functions as a cohesive force in establishing cultural identity, but for the time being I shall focus on the fact that, even from the outset of the period in question, the literature of colonial feminist writers manifests the analytical and contestatory qualities of postcolonial discourse. Both Moodie and Spence are not only aware of, but also concerned to rebuff, the claims that emigration, especially female emigration, is the solution to the ills of nineteenth-century Britain. As I show in later chapters, with the passage of time, colonial women writers become more analytical of both patriarchal and imperialist discourses, and the nature of their writing more contestatory.

In considering the relationship between the literature of colonial feminist writers and postcolonial literatures, it is noteworthy that both Moodie and Spence regard the readership at the metropolis as their audience. According to Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin:

Directly and indirectly, in Salman Rushdie's phrase, the 'Empire writes back' to the imperial 'centre,' not only through nationalist assertion, proclaiming itself central and self-determining, but even more radically by questioning the bases of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place. In this way, concepts of polarity, of 'governor and governed, ruler and ruled' are challenged as an essential way of ordering reality.<sup>106</sup>

Although both writers differ from many of their successors whose works are discussed in subsequent chapters, because they do not challenge the basic ideology of empire that

<sup>105</sup>Slomon, Stephen: 'Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World', in *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1990), p. 32.

<sup>106</sup>Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin: *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial Literatures*, Routledge, London, 1989, p. 33; Ashcroft *et al* cite Rushdie, Salman: *The Times*, 3.7.80.

justifies the seizure of lands belonging to First Nation peoples, it is clear that, in their work, protofeminist and anti-colonialist sentiment are drawn together from an early stage through their oppositional placing of patriarchy and female subject, and centre and periphery.

In the context of Elaine Showalter's schema of literature written by women, *Clara Morison* and *Roughing it in the Bush* belong, chronologically, to the initial phase covering the period from the 1840s to 1880. This is the phase Showalter terms "Feminine", and she defines it as one of "imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and *internalization* of its standards of art and its views on social roles".<sup>107</sup> However, both books testify to the fact that their authors were in the process of departing from the norms outlined by Showalter. Stylistically, both works cohere to established forms; although Moodie can now be seen as being in the vanguard in her deployment of the literary sketch as a *colonial* mode, she was drawing on an earlier tradition of sketchwriting popular from the seventeenth century onwards, and Spence's *Clara Morison* might perhaps be viewed as a protest or social purpose novel of the type popular in the 1840s. Yet, as Showalter points out, "(p)rotest fiction represented another projection of female experience onto another group; it translated the felt pain and oppression of women into the championship of mill-workers, child laborers, prostitutes, and slaves", and at least one leading proponent of the genre, Elizabeth Gaskell, strongly believed that "women should fight for others but not for themselves".<sup>108</sup>

However, both Moodie and Spence are writing from a personalized viewpoint. This is borne out by the thematic content of *Roughing it in the Bush* and *Clara Morison* which indicates that their chief interests are the more accurate representation of the experience of the emigrant female and the exploration of the estrangement of the female self from society. Indeed, the movement towards the projection of the female self is confirmed by the portrayal, in these works, of significant catoptric moments. At two points when Moodie is about to leave the seclusion of her home in the bush, she dwells on the effect of her sojourn in the wilderness on her self: "I have lived so long

<sup>107</sup>Showalter, Elaine: *A Literature of Their Own: from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing*, Virago, London, 1999, p. 13; first published by Virago, London, 1978, Showalter's italics.

<sup>108</sup>Showalter, 1999, pp. 28 & 216.

out of the world that I am at a great loss what to do"; "I looked double the age I really was, and my hair was already thickly sprinkled with grey ...I was no longer fit for the world".<sup>109</sup> Exile in the wilderness has denatured her as a woman and destroyed her sense of self. Spence's concern to represent the female sense of self is apparent in Margaret's protestation, "I cannot bear the idea of selling my time, my mind, my identical self, for so much a-year. ...I cannot bring my mind to such a thing".<sup>110</sup> For Margaret, too, life under colonialism and under patriarchy represents a particular kind of female estrangement from the self, and alienation from society.

According to Showalter, it is not until the third phase of her schema, the "*Female*" phase, that "*self-discovery*" and a "search for identity" become a dominant themes. Even the middle phase, which she has designated as "*Feminist*", she views as one of protest, of "advocacy of minority rights and values", and of demands for autonomy.<sup>111</sup> In Showalter's terms, the transitional point between "feminine" novels and "feminist" writing is a shift towards sensation novels as a means of escape from the ethic of self-sacrifice of the "feminine" phase.<sup>112</sup> It is, however, my contention that the female *Bildungsroman* played a significant part in the development of the feminist novel, particularly in the colonial arena. Both *Roughing it in the Bush* and *Clara Morison* are early examples of the colonial feminist *Bildungsroman*, showing the education of the heroine(s) through experience and against the background of relationships with others. In the chapter which follows, therefore, I discuss the full emergence of the colonial feminist *Bildungsroman*, and the way in which colonial women writers adapted this form as a means of exploring the female self.

§§§

---

<sup>109</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, pp. 464 & 497.

<sup>110</sup>Spence, *C.M.*, p. 213.

<sup>111</sup>Showalter, 1999, p. 13.

<sup>112</sup>Showalter, 1999, p. 181.

### Chapter 3

#### Writes of Passage: Feminism and the Colonial *Bildungsroman*

I shall go deeply into books and I shall learn from better words.<sup>1</sup>

True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many ...hundreds of selves? ...There are moments when I feel I am nothing but the small clerk of some hotel without a proprietor, who has all his work cut out to enter the names and hand the keys to the wilful guests.<sup>2</sup>

§§§

In arguing that the sensation novel marks the transition between the feminine and feminist phases, Elaine Showalter stresses that the sensation novelists “especially valued passion and assertive action”, seeing themselves “as daughters of Charlotte Brontë rather than George Eliot”.<sup>3</sup> Whereas feminine novelists “had internalized the codes of genteel womanhood”, she maintains, the novels of sensation writers are characterized by “the secrets of women’s dislike of their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers ...by expressing a wide range of suppressed female emotions, and by tapping and satisfying fantasies of protest and escape”.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, however, I argue that not only is the adaptation of the male *Bildungsroman* pivotal to the subversion of the literary style and the thematic content of the feminine mode, but also, because the *Bildungsroman* mode is suited to the expression of feminist views, as I shall show, it is particularly well represented in colonial women’s writing where it offers the means of expressing female individuation.

Literally translated as the novel of (self-) construction, the *Bildungsroman* initially portrayed the progress to maturity and self-realisation of a male protagonist. One of the earliest examples of the genre was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-6), or *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, a novel which achieved an even wider audience following its translation into English by Thomas Carlyle in 1824.

<sup>1</sup>Translation of Latin legend “*Ibo intro ad libros et discam de dictis melioribus*” on bookplates designed for Pauline Smith; reproduced on the cover of Twentymen Jones, Leonie: *The Pauline Smith Collection*, University of Cape Town Libraries, Cape Town, 1982.

<sup>2</sup>Mansfield, Katherine: *Journal*, April 1920, in (ed.) C.K. Stead: *The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup>Showalter, 1999, p. 154. Amongst others, Showalter lists Mary E. Braddon, ‘Ouida’, Charlotte Riddell, Amelia B. Edwards, Florence Marryat, Helen Reeves, Rhoda Broughton, and children’s writers Mary Molesworth, Juliana Ewing, and Frances Hodgson Burnett, as sensation novelists.

<sup>4</sup>Showalter, 1999, pp. 177, 158 & 159.



Typically, nineteenth-century male versions of the *Bildungsroman*, exemplified by Dickens' novels *David Copperfield* (1849-50) and *Great Expectations* (1860-1), focus on male maturation through a male protagonist's break with home or parental bonds. Central to this maturation process is the acquisition of learning, both formal and informal, through life's experiences, including encounters with women which play an important role in the shaping of the male self, as well as the realization of ambitious drive for upward social mobility and gentlemanly status.

The *Bildungsroman* soon migrated across gender boundaries to become a popular mode in women's writing. Germany, its spiritual home, is often credited with one of the earliest women's examples of the genre in Therese Huber's *Ellen Percy, oder die Erziehung durch Schicksale* (1822). Indeed, early female representations of the form could perhaps be more accurately termed the *Schicksalroman*, the novel of destiny, or even the *Entsagungsroman*, the novel of renunciation, because female development was restricted by women's limited life chances, equally limited educational opportunities, and their lack of autonomy before the law. Yet, arguing that Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) must also be considered as an early female *Bildungsroman*, Jane McDonnell draws attention to the fact that it was women's dependent, childlike position in society which commended the genre to many women writers:

Like those later female *Bildungsromane*, *Jane Eyre* and *The Mill on the Floss*, Austen's novel involves a relatively long period of time to trace patterns of 'growth' from an abused childhood to an assertion of independence, in a crisis that involves both family and cultural ideals. And in *Mansfield Park*, as in *Jane Eyre*, an analogy is drawn between the dependency of the child (as orphan or virtual orphan) and the dependent position of women in general. Thus the novel uses the *Bildungsroman* theme of childhood and youth spent in a hostile setting to focus on questions of sexual politics as well.<sup>5</sup>

With the growing awareness of women's rights issues from the mid nineteenth century onwards, the female *Bildungsroman* was to prove a popular genre for women writers seeking to express the frustrations engendered by the infantilization of women. These are epitomized by Frances Power Cobbe's famous question, some fifty years after Austen's death. In an article discussing "the four categories under which persons are

---

<sup>5</sup>McDonnell, Jane: 'Austen's Sexual Politics', in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 17, 3, Spring 1984, p. 198. Austen's *Mansfield Park* was written in 1811, but not published until 1814.

now excluded from many civil, and all political rights in England", namely, 'Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors', she asks:

Ought Englishwomen of full age, at the present state of affairs, to be considered as having legally attained majority? Or ought they permanently to be considered, for all civil and political purposes, as minors?<sup>6</sup>

The constraints on women's lives which were dictated by social convention and by the sexual double standard not only inhibited women's development in reality and in terms of fictional plotting, but they also served to inhibit the development of women's literature during the 'feminine' phase. With marriage regarded as their only respectable career or goal, females were closely guarded by parents or guardians in order to ensure that their bodies and reputations, and feminine sensibilities, were preserved so that they might be passed, *virgo intacta* and innocent, to their husbands. As a result, throughout a large part of the nineteenth century, women's literature was unable to explore or express adequately a form of female self-development which might equal that of the male protagonists of male *Bildungsromane*.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of female career prospects, ambition in women's novels was almost exclusively expressed through the form which had persisted from the eighteenth century, namely romantic plots, with marriage as the ultimate goal and habitual means of closure; the alternative, as Rita Felski points out, was death:

the female-centred novel of the eighteenth century is characterised by a choice of two plots: the 'euphoric', in which the heroine "moves in her negotiation with the world of men and money from 'nothing' to 'all' in a feminine variation of *Bildung*", and the

---

<sup>6</sup>Cobbe, Frances Power: 'Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors', in (ed.) Susan Hamilton: *Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors: Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario, 1995, p. 110; first published in *Fraser's Magazine*, December 1868.

<sup>7</sup>"Even in the nineteenth century, a woman lived almost solely in her home and her emotions. And those nineteenth-century novels, remarkable as they were, were profoundly influenced by the fact that the women who wrote them were excluded by their sex from certain kinds of experience. That experience has a great influence upon fiction is indisputable. The best part of Conrad's novels, for instance, would be destroyed if it had been impossible for him to be a sailor. Take away all that Tolstoi knew of war as a soldier, of life and society as a rich young man whose education admitted him to all sorts of experience, and *War and Peace* would be incredibly impoverished. Yet *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Villette*, and *Middlemarch* were written by women from whom was forcibly withheld all experience save that which could be met with in a middle-class drawing room. ... Even their emotional life was strictly regulated by law and custom. When George Eliot ventured to live with Mr. Lewes without being his wife, public opinion was scandalized. Under its pressure she withdrew into a suburban seclusion which, inevitably, had the worst possible effects upon her work. She wrote that unless people asked of their own accord to come and see her, she never invited them. At the same time, on the other side of Europe, Tolstoi was living a free life as a soldier, with men and women of all classes, for which nobody censured him and from which his novels drew much of their astonishing breadth and vigour." Woolf, Virginia: 'Women and Fiction', in (ed.) Michèle Barrett: *Virginia Woolf on Women and Writing*, The Women's Press, London, 1979, pp. 46-47; first published in *The Forum*, March 1929.

'dysphoric', which ends with "the heroine's death in the flower of her youth".<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, as Felski indicates, this plotting reflects the fact that the upward social mobility of females was only achievable through marriage. The symbolic break from the controlling influence of home crucial to the male *Bildungsroman* could be negotiated, as in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and in Elizabeth Wetherell's perennial best-seller, *The Wide Wide World* (1850), by representing women and girls as orphans, but the portrayal of the development of the female self through a range of encounters with the opposite sex required delicate handling, for loss of decorum and ladylike status not only threatened a novel's successful resolution in marriage in terms of plotting, but it could also mar the reputation, and hence the career, of the woman writer herself.

Showalter does acknowledge the fact that, in the course of the nineteenth century, academic education, or rather the dearth of it for women, took on increased thematic significance for the women writers of 'feminine' novels:

One of the outstanding characteristics of the feminine novelists [*is*] their envy of classical education...

The feminine novel of the period up to about 1880 reflects women's intense effort to meet the educational standards of the male establishment. It is a commonplace for an ambitious heroine in a feminine novel to make mastery of the classics her initial goal in her search for truth.<sup>9</sup>

Yet despite the growing popularity of the female *Bildungsroman*, Showalter proffers the sensation novel as the form which subverts the feminine novel.<sup>10</sup> As she explains, a typical example of a sensation novel by a woman writer portrays conflict with male authority in volume one, the onset of guilt in volume two, and the punishment of the heroine in volume three. This collapse into feminine conditioning, and retreat into the established literary form of the three-decker novel close to its demise, tends to undermine Showalter's strategic positioning of sensation writers as being on the cusp

---

<sup>8</sup>Felski, Rita: 'The Novel of Self-Discovery, A Necessary Fiction?', in *Southern Review*, 19, July 1986, p. 132. Felski cites Miller, Nancy K.: *The Heroine's Text: Readings in the French and English Novel 1722-1782*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980, p. xi.

<sup>9</sup>Showalter, 1999, pp. 41 & 42.

<sup>10</sup>Authorial interest in female education, and the generic usefulness of the *Bildungsroman* as a female mode made it popular during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Examples include: Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and *Northanger Abbey* (1818); Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853); George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860); Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899). It was also a popular form for girls' novels, including Elizabeth Wetherell's *The Wide Wide World* (1850), Louisa M. Alcott's *Little Women* (1868-9), Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* series (1872-86), and Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* series (1908-).

of feminist writing, but was, she maintains, due to "(t)he fear of being morbid, unnatural, and unfeminine [which] kept women writers from working out the implications of their plots".<sup>11</sup>

Whilst sensation novels may indeed have unlocked flights of female fantasy and an emotive response to patriarchal constraints, it is central to my argument in this chapter that, in women's colonial writing, it was the way in which the writers adapted the female *Bildungsroman* which marks the transition between the feminine and feminist phases rather than the emergence of the sensation novel. Showalter concedes that sensation novels were not universally acclaimed in their time:

Many Victorian readers saw female sensation fiction as sexually provocative. From *Punch*, which parodied 'Lady Disorderly's Secret', to the *Christian Rembrancer*, which brooded on the 'utter unrestraint' of passion in the heroines, journalists denounced the corrupting tendencies of sensationalism.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, the emergence of the female *Bildungsroman* is significant not only because it represents an evolutionary point in the colonial literary tradition, but also because it functions as a genuine indicator of female intellectual and political growth by engaging with the gradually evolving feminist dialectic concerning women's education and acculturation. For these reasons, as I shall argue, the female *Bildungsroman* has also proved to be particularly suited to the ideology of colonial, and postcolonial, women writers.

The extension of mass female education and the growth of feminism, in the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, can be seen as parallel and mutually beneficial developments directly relating to the rise of the female *Bildungsroman*. As a widening circle of girls and women entered secondary schooling, and later university courses, so, incrementally, the extension of female literacy broadened women's horizons and stimulated fresh insights into 'the woman problem', enabling the propagation of feminist views to a wider readership via an ever-increasing company of campaigners and women writers.<sup>13</sup> In turn, demands for equal adult status

<sup>11</sup>Showalter, 1999, p. 181.

<sup>12</sup>Showalter, 1999, p. 160; George Eliot and Margaret Oliphant figured amongst the female detractors of sensation writing.

<sup>13</sup>The popularity of the *Bildungsroman* as a female form was not restricted to novels written in English: "Between 1900 and 1905, almost a dozen novels were published in France whose protagonists were school girls and/or women schoolteachers". (Rogers, Juliette M.: 'Educating the Heroine: Continued on next page...

with men to end the infantilization of women intensified; calls for the improvement of female educational opportunity were matched by concomitant claims for enhanced career prospects in order to lessen female dependency and to obviate the necessity for marriage; equal legal and civil rights were demanded, as was the abolition of the sexual double standard. The rise of woman-centred *Bildungsromane* interrogating feminine acculturation and challenging both the standard and content of women's education, was therefore, a development which took place synergetically with the extension of feminist thought. As a result, it has been seized upon as an overtly feminist form that liquidates feminine stereotypes, such as the Angel in the House, and expresses the potential for women's social and sexual development, because, by subverting patriarchal mores and patriarchal constructions of womanhood in the very genre employed by male writers to assert the intellectual and moral development of male heroes, women writers engage in a double subversion.

The features which commended the adoption and adaptation of the *Bildungsroman* as literary form for the expression of female self-development by women writers in the early nineteenth century, and their feminist successors, have also rendered it an apposite form for colonial women writers. Felski notes, in an examination of late twentieth-century novels of self-discovery written by women, that the effort of detachment from feminine acculturation under patriarchy constitutes a symbolic journey which serves to structure the female *Bildungsroman* because "identity is defined primarily through gender, and development requires a process of separation from and opposition to the male sphere through the assertion of female difference".<sup>14</sup> In the context of female *Bildungsromane* by colonial women writers, the symbolic journey of self-discovery was also enacted through the alienating effect of separation from the 'home' culture of Britain in which the role of women was carefully defined, and was achieved through actual physical journeys, as well as mental journeys, which distanced the protagonist from Britain or from other representations of metropolitan culture.

---

<sup>13</sup>Continued from previous page...

Turn-of-the-Century Feminism and French Women's Education Novels', in *Women's Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1994, pp. 322-23)

<sup>14</sup>Felski, 1986, p. 137.

Consequently, in the new colonies, where territory was both geographically and culturally uncharted, and where women were required to create a semblance of 'home' (both as a place to live, and as a reflection of the metropolis), often whilst engaging in arduous labour alongside men, the renegotiation of women's roles, and the concomitant reorientation of the female consciousness, posed great challenges. By no means least amongst these was the fact that, although the break from 'home' culture also offered liberation for those able to grapple with the opportunity, the feminine stereotypes to which Victorian women were expected to conform functioned both as form of entrapment and as a retreat or haven within the safety of known territory. Thus the strong desire to escape the confines of the circumscribed role of womanhood is met by a paradoxical but equally forceful compulsion to conform, a phenomenon which I have named the 'double impulse'. This is manifested in some of the female *Bildungsromane* examined in this chapter as contradictory twin movements: women seek flight from and refuge in areas symbolizing female enclosure, reminiscent of Jane Eyre's Red Room.<sup>15</sup>

In an article examining a wide range of female *Bildungsromane* originating in the outposts of the former British empire, Margaret K. Butcher remarks that the writers of these texts have consciously subscribed to a tradition in which they have drawn and built upon the conventions of the *Bildungsroman*, and she concludes, "The emergence of the female *bildungsroman* is one of the earliest and clearest signs of the development of the Commonwealth novel with a history and tradition of its own".<sup>16</sup> She cites the fact Henry Handel Richardson located her first novel, *Maurice Guest* (1908), as a *Bildungsroman*, through an intertextual allusion to Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) in its opening pages; as Butcher points out, Doris Lessing, too, situates her *Martha Quest* quintet as a narrative of female development by

<sup>15</sup>The 'double impulse' is best illustrated by an incident in *The Piano*, the 1993 film written and directed by Jane Campion, where the crinoline worn by the female protagonist symbolizes the way in which stereotypes of Victorian femininity encaged and entrapped, when it hampers her struggle to escape her role as a dutiful and faithful wife, yet it also functions as a protective tent in which she and her daughter shelter when they find themselves abandoned on the beach overnight.

<sup>16</sup>Butcher, Margaret K.: 'From *Maurice Guest* to *Martha Quest*: The Female *Bildungsroman* in Commonwealth Literature', in *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 21, 2, 1982, pp. 261-2. Amongst other works, Butcher discusses the *Bildung* theme in Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* (1870-2) and *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1874), Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Henry Handel Richardson's novels *Maurice Guest* (1908), *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910), and *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* (1917-1929), Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence* quintet which opens with *Martha Quest* (1952), and concludes with *The Four-Gated City* (1969) as well as her seminal feminist text *The Golden Notebook* (1962), and Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* (1964), *A Jest of God* (1966), *The Fire Dwellers* (1969), and *The Diviners* (1974).

using epigraphs from *Story of an African Farm* and by depicting Martha in the act of reading a work by Havelock Ellis, a close friend of Schreiner's, in the opening pages of the first novel.

As *The Story of an African Farm* is regarded as influential in the field of feminist writing, it makes a fitting starting point in this chapter. In the first half I trace the development of the female *Bildungsroman*, and the way in which the writers explore looking-glass iconography and the hegemonic construction of femininity, by examining Schreiner's novel in relation to Pauline Smith's *The Beadle* (1926) and Lessing's *Martha Quest* (1952). Although Lessing's book was published just outside the period covered by this thesis, such is the significance of her contribution to colonial and postcolonial literature that I have chosen to discuss it briefly in order to illustrate the evolution of the female *Bildungsroman* as a colonial genre. The second half of the chapter leaves Southern Africa to examine the way in which women writers elsewhere in the world moved beyond the looking-glass, and used writing and the female *Bildungsroman* as a means of renegotiating female identity in a colonial setting.

### **Stories of African Farms: The Farm, the Child, and the Colony**

Olive Schreiner's novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, published in London in 1883, is notable both for its form and content. Published initially under the pseudonym 'Ralph Iron', it ran to three editions within its first year and, by the third edition, Olive Schreiner was acknowledged as the author. Immediate reaction to the book was mixed and ranged from outrage to acclaim. Although one early twentieth-century writer recalls that he met a woman who was so shocked by the novel that she used tongs to put it upon the fire, those who praised it recognized its new approach and it was hailed by one reviewer as being by no means "a reflection of any other book, but a new book".<sup>17</sup> Schreiner's determination to create a new type of colonial text is indicated in the Author's Preface. Rather than glamorizing the imperial project in Africa with heroic adventures of "encounters with ravaging lions, and hairbreadth escapes", she signals an attempt to express authenticity, showing life not according to a predictable plan, or "the stage method", in which "each character is duly marshalled at first, and ticketed",

---

<sup>17</sup>Laurence Housman: *The Unexpected Years*, 1937, pp. 135, 139; cited in First & Scott, 1989, p. 123; Anon.: 'The Story of an African Farm', in *Life*, 8.2.1883, pp. 107-8.

and in which there is "an immutable certainty that at the right crises each one will reappear and act his part", but according to "the method of life we all lead". This, she maintains, reflects the randomness of real life:

Here nothing can be prophesied. There is a strange coming and going of feet. Men appear, act and re-act upon each other, and pass away. When the crisis comes the man who would fit it does not return.<sup>18</sup>

The concluding words of the epigraph to the novel, "The entire man is, so to speak, to be found in the cradle of the child", point to the *Bildungsroman* as Schreiner's chosen mode.<sup>19</sup> Its setting, the barren landscape of the Karroo, stands as trope for existential angst and the experience of colonial alienation, and these are shown through the thwarted development of two colonial children, Lyndall and Waldo. Schreiner's exploration of gender acculturation and the patriarchal structures which perpetuate man's subjugation of woman and of his fellow man, tracks the development of Waldo's poetic imagination in his faltering search for spiritual rationale by setting his outer and inner life against the barren wilderness of the Karroo; however, at the same time it parallels Waldo's alienation to that of Lyndall, as a female unable to survive in the bleak wastes of male domination.

One criticism levelled at *The Story of an African Farm* is that Schreiner's representation of characters is flawed because "(a)bout half ...are seen from the outside and the other half from the inside".<sup>20</sup> Yet Schreiner's portrayal of the interior development of the female/male dyad, Lyndall and Waldo, as joint protagonists,

---

<sup>18</sup>Schreiner, Olive: Preface, *The Story of an African Farm*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. xxxix; first published by Chapman and Hall, London, 1883. (Hereafter given as Schreiner, *S.A.F.*)

<sup>19</sup>Epigraph attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville. Schreiner is known to have admired Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and she wrote to her friend, Havelock Ellis, "*Wilhelm Meister* is one of the most immortal deathless productions of the greatest of the world's artists, ...worth any six of Balzac's novels, great and glorious as Balzac is". (letter dated 14.5.1886; in (ed.) Rive, Richard: *Olive Schreiner, Letters, Vol. 1, 1871-1899*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987, p. 79) To another friend, Karl Pearson, she wrote: "Did *Wilhelm Meister* make the world seem so large and open to you when you read it the first time?" (First & Scott, 1989, p. 159, letter dated 10.11.1885, cited in Rive, 1987, n.2, p. 79)

<sup>20</sup>Krige, Uys: 'Olive Schreiner: Poet and Prophet', Editor's Introduction to *Olive Schreiner: A Selection*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1968, p. 3. Schreiner acknowledges this in a letter to Havelock Ellis: "I agree with you in objecting to Bonaparte; he is drawn closely after life, but in hard lines without shading, and is not artistic nor idealised enough"; however, a subsequent letter states, "When I said that Bonaparte was not 'idealised' enough, perhaps I was using the word in a sense of my own; what I meant was, that he was painted roughly from the *outside* ...not sympathetically from the inside showing the how and why of his being the manner of sinner he was. I should have entered into him and showed his many sides, not only the one superficial side that was ridiculous; then he would have been a real human creature to love or to hate, and not farcical at all". (letters dated 25.2.1884, in Rive, 1987, p. 35, and 16.3.1884, in Krige, 1968, p. 195)



manifests a recurring feature of the female *Bildungsroman* which Elizabeth Abel *et al* have described as the "symbiotic brother-sister pair".<sup>21</sup> By showing Lyndall/Waldo as rounded, three-dimensional or developing characters, Schreiner succeeds in emphasizing the differences between them and the flat, or undeveloped, characters around them. Indeed, by introducing what might be termed 'multiple generational pairings' in the adult characters of Otto, Bonaparte Blenkins, and Tant' Sannie, and the younger characters of Gregory Rose and Em, Schreiner is also able to convey both generational distance and retarded chances of development.<sup>22</sup> Butcher points out that in the female *Bildungsroman*, such female/male pairings of siblings, or of children who are reared together through circumstance, also serve to highlight the fact that "the only role models available to women were masculine".<sup>23</sup> Usually, close comparisons along gender lines, such as these, are used in feminist writing to bring the paucity of female education into focus.

The farm where the action takes place is a microcosm of the colony for which it comes to stand as trope, with the warring adults, Otto, Tant' Sannie, and Bonaparte Blenkins representing respectively Germany, the Boer settler community, and Britain, three of the colonial powers contesting land rights in Southern Africa. As in many other female *Bildungsromane*, the children, Lyndall, Waldo, and Em, are orphaned, thus enabling the depiction of the symbolic break from home which facilitates the journey towards development. Whilst the adults denote the negative stereotypes of the parent country, the young orphans also symbolize the colony's infancy, the break from the parent country, and its future viability. The pairing of Lyndall and Waldo therefore creates a composite, colonial child with the potential for symbiotic female/male development, whose spiritual self-realization is not only integral to the welfare of the farm, but also to that of the colony itself.

---

<sup>21</sup>Abel, Elizabeth, Marianne Hirsch & Elizabeth Langland: *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, University Press of New England, Dartmouth College, Hanover, 1983, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup>I borrow the phrase "retarded chance of development" from an article comparing Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*, discussed later in this chapter, and *The Story of an African Farm*, where it is applied to two of Franklin's characters, Mrs M'Swat and Lucy Melvyn, rather than to Schreiner's. (Green, G.V.: 'Overturning the Doll's House: A Feminist Comparison', in *Crux*, 17:2, May 1983, p. 48)

<sup>23</sup>Butcher, 1982, p. 255.

Schreiner adapts the characteristic estrangement from home or family of the *Bildungsroman* mode to express the individual's alienation from society, and from her/himself, under imperialism. Her exploration of the colonial child's development focuses upon the role of the patriarchal infrastructure in upholding imperial power to the detriment of the individual and the colony; in doing so, she contextualizes the child's struggle for individuation against a background in which Christianity is responsible for her/his acculturation. As Simone de Beauvoir has shown in her seminal study of woman's subjection under patriarchy, *The Second Sex*, Christian dogma not only defines woman and child as Other, but it also constructs woman in the same terms of immaturity as the child, an issue of particular significance in the context of the female *Bildungsroman*:

It is Christianity which invests woman anew with frightening prestige: fear of the other sex is one of the forms assumed by the anguish of man's uneasy conscience. The Christian is divided within himself; the separation of body and soul, of life and spirit, is complete; original sin makes of the body the enemy of the soul; all ties of the flesh seem evil\*. ... Evil is an absolute reality; and the flesh is sin. And of course, since woman remains always the Other, it is not held that reciprocally male and female are both flesh: the flesh that is for the Christian the hostile *Other* is precisely woman. In her the Christian finds incarnated the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. All the Fathers of the Church insist on the idea that she led Adam into sin.

\*Up to the end of the twelfth century the theologians, except St Anselm, considered that according to the doctrine of St Augustine original sin is involved in the very law of generation: 'Concupiscence is a vice ... human flesh born through it is a sinful flesh,' writes St Augustine. And St Thomas: 'The union of the sexes transmits original sin to the child, being accompanied, since the Fall, by concupiscence.'<sup>24</sup>

This doctrine therefore functions as a successful operand of male hegemony in order to control the behaviour of woman and child; being defined as the receptacles of sin, always liable to slide further towards their original sinful state, woman and child are defined as marginal, hovering perpetually on the brink of full acceptance into membership of Christianity, a state of grace which is always deferred and which is conditional to their ongoing obedience and conformity to the standards of compliance demanded by patriarchy.

The dichotomy presented through the consciousness of the colonial child in *The Story of an African Farm* is that Christian doctrine, as it is represented by Blenkins, serves to control and exclude, whilst, as it is represented by Otto, it proclaims the comfort of God's paternal benevolence. The farm-colony "ruled" by Tant' Sannie supplies the

<sup>24</sup>de Beauvoir, Simone: *The Second Sex* (translated and edited by H.M. Parshley), Picador Pan, 1988, p. 198; footnote p. 198; first published as *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Gallimard, France, 1949.

bare necessities of existence but it is "a place to sleep in, to eat in, not to be happy in".<sup>25</sup> Thus the children have learned to gravitate towards the spiritual and emotional nourishment offered by Otto's brand of religion with its ideal of the parent country as home, its ethic of inclusivity for the Christian élite, and its doctrines of salvation and reincarnation. The narratorial voice moves in and out of the children's minds to juxtapose the rote assimilation of biblical precepts and verse taught by Otto, against his accounts of a childhood in Germany where "fifty years before, ...[he] had played at snowballs, and had carried home the knitted stockings of a little girl who afterwards became Waldo's mother".<sup>26</sup> Otto's religion is, therefore, one in which biblical rhetoric has become inextricably interwoven with a mythology of 'home', so that both combine to construct the children's concept of 'reality':

they would fall to deeper speculations - of the times and seasons wherein the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the stars shall fall as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, and there shall be time no longer; 'the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him.'<sup>27</sup>

Yet the real lesson of colonial experience is that the religious and secular certainties which sustained Otto and his forefathers hold little relevance in the colony. In an attempt to connect with the religion of his forebears, and to prove the existence of God, Waldo emulates Old Testament patriarchs, but his childish ritual sacrifice of a mutton chop, and his plea for a sign, remain ignored: "Please, my Father, send fire down from heaven to burn it. Thou hast said, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast into the sea, nothing doubting, it shall be done".<sup>28</sup> Disillusion therefore leads to the only logical conclusion suggested by the scriptures: that he is, like Cain, outcast and stigmatized as sinful: "God cannot lie. I had faith. No fire came. I am like Cain - I am not His. He will not hear my prayer. God hates me".<sup>29</sup> Abandoned by his heavenly Father and burdened with guilt, Waldo's alienation is compounded when the godly

---

<sup>25</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 21; Schreiner cites from Revelation 6:14, "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places"; Revelation 6:13, "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken by a mighty wind"; and Matthew 25:31, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory".

<sup>28</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 6; Waldo misquotes Mark, 11:23: "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith".

<sup>29</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 7; Cain's murder of his brother, Abel, led to his ostracism; he was cursed and marked by God, and went to live in exile east of Eden; Genesis 4:1-16.

Otto, his temporal father, is hounded from the farm-colony by Bonaparte Blenkins and dies; because this lacks any semblance of divine justice it appears to confirm the emptiness of Christian rhetoric.

If the colonial child's primary lesson is that, like Waldo and Otto, mankind is indeed abandoned by God to pursue a lonely path in the vast spiritual deserts of the world, Schreiner's analysis of imperial power in the figure of Bonaparte Blenkins suggests that the second lesson is that Christianity can be usurped both as a powerful means of controlling the individual, and as a convenient guise in the appropriation of colonial hegemony. Blenkins' forename, and his claim to kinship with Napoleon and Wellington, characterize him as a colonial bully with aspirations to power and empire-building who opposes the assertion of individual rights and democracy.<sup>30</sup> A consummate liar, he not only succeeds in supplanting Otto by usurping his roles as the children's tutor and as overseer of the farm-colony, but also he literally dons the respectable exterior of Christianity to clothe his intentions when he assumes Otto's function as preacher, wearing Otto's Sunday suit. Here, Schreiner underscores her point with heavy irony, because his chosen text is, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"<sup>31</sup>

The generalized child's quest for self-development is paralleled to a series of ideologies with the potential to rationalize or counter acculturation under patriarchal hegemony. In a letter written some thirteen years after the publication of *The Story of an African Farm*, Schreiner compares the influence of certain philosophers on her own "moral and spiritual growth". Although she stresses the centrality of J.S. Mill's philosophy to her development, it is apparent from her analysis of the societal estrangement of the individual in the figure of Waldo that Marxist philosophy, too, not only influenced her approach to man's alienation through religion but also played a part in her portrayal of man's alienation through the rule of capital.<sup>32</sup> Writing about religion, Karl Marx has

<sup>30</sup>Napoleon Bonaparte's role as dictator and imperialist is well-known; less obvious, perhaps, is the fact that the Duke of Wellington, who conquered Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, was responsible for organizing the British government's military opposition to Chartism in 1848; the radical working-class movement claimed increased democratic rights for the individual through demands for the extension of universal male suffrage, and the abolition of the property qualification.

<sup>31</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 31; Revelations 21:8

<sup>32</sup>Schreiner admired J.S. Mill and first read his *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) whilst she was  
Continued on next page...

argued that it operates over the individual as a form of control by functioning as a palliative which deadens the pain of man's alienation from society and is, therefore, a substitute for the achievement of full self-awareness:

Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed man's self-consciousness and self-awareness as long as he has not found his feet in the universe. But man is not an abstract being, squatting outside the world. Man is the world of men, the State, and society. This State, this society, produce religion which is an inverted world consciousness, because they are an inverted world. ...Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.<sup>33</sup>

In *The Story of an African Farm*, the colonial child's quest for *Bildung* is indeed the struggle to find her/his feet in a universe epitomized by the "soulless conditions" described by Marx. Schreiner's debt to Mill is acknowledged with Waldo's discovery of Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), which falls open at "a chapter on property ... - Communism, Fourierism, St. Simonism", causing Waldo to rejoice that, at last, he has found a philosophy with which he can identify:

All he read he did not fully understand; the thoughts were new to him; but this was the fellow's startled joy in the book - the thoughts were his, they belonged to him. He had never thought them before, but they were his.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, Blenkins' obdurate refusal to open his mind to alternative philosophies, and his destruction of the book, which he condemns as the work of the devil with the words "sleg, sleg, Davel, Davel!", foregrounds Schreiner's critique of the usurpation of Christianity for purposes that might be termed imperio-capitalist exploitation: Mill's chapter, 'Of Property', is a discussion of property ownership and modes of distributing wealth.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>Continued from previous page...

staying at Dordrecht in 1871-2. In a letter to Betty Molteno, dated 22.5.1896, she writes, "the book which has had most effect on my spiritual life was Mill's *Logic*, and more or less all his works, especially his *Political Economy*. ...Modern Political Economists, such as Karl Marx have gone much further than Mill in the analysis of economic fact, and as far as mere technical knowledge of logic goes other writers will now reproduce for you all Mill stated, but the spirit, the pure soul searching after *Truth*, which is God, seeking to know nothing, to seek nothing, to discover nothing but *truth*, that, just that you will find nowhere else as in following and watching the mind of Mill at work." An earlier letter to Havelock Ellis, dated 26.1.1888, states, "Someone has said that the power of stimulating thought and feeling is the power of genius. Only genius can do it, but all genius doesn't do it. Mill does, Spencer doesn't do it to the same extent. Goethe does ...". (Rive, 1987, pp. 134, 215 n. 4; & 277)

<sup>33</sup>Marx, Karl: *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, I/1/1, 1927, pp. 607 ff., transl. by T.B. Bottomore; cited in (eds.) Bottomore, T.B. & Maximilien Rubel: *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1963, p. 41.

<sup>34</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 76.

<sup>35</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 80; 'Of Property' is the first chapter of Book II, 'Distribution', in Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*. It considers modes of distributing the produce of the land and labour, describing

Continued on next page...

This episode is linked to one in which the “nice little machine” manufactured by Waldo to help with the shearing is smashed by Blenkins, bearing a “little whip of rhinoceros hide”, symbol of imperial power and the rule of capital over labour.<sup>36</sup> In a critique of Hegel’s concept of labour as an alienated form, Marx states:

The outstanding thing in Hegel’s *Phänomenologie* is that Hegel grasps the self-creation of Man as a process ...; and that he therefore grasps the nature of *labour* and conceives the object man ...as the result of his own labour.<sup>37</sup>

The machine can therefore be seen, in this context, as representing Waldo as the product of his own labour and as his attempt to fashion, or develop himself; however, together with the burning of the book, it also illustrates both the negativity and the destructive force of capitalism. Set against the philosophies propounded by Mill and Marx, the removal of Waldo’s machine and Mill’s book by Blenkins are actions which doubly deny the rights of the individual: the destruction of the machine controverts the right of Waldo’s ownership to it, and his right to conceive, or fashion, himself as possessor, or object of his own labour, thereby thwarting his own process of ‘self-creation’, or *Bildung*. Similarly, the destruction of the book, which properly belongs to Em, controverts her rights as owner; it also enables the rule of capital to dominate through Blenkins’ retention of control over Waldo’s mind, and hence his body as an economic unit of work, because the book represents the means by which Waldo might bring about his own intellectual development in order to articulate demands for emancipation and to benefit from his own labour, thereby conceiving himself as a fully self-possessing object in the terms of Marxist doctrine.

The scrutiny of imperio-capitalism in *The Story of an African Farm* culminates by paralleling Waldo’s oppression under the authority-figure Blenkins, to the experience of a dung beetle as the toy of Doss, the dog:

The beetle was hard at work trying to roll home a great ball of dung it had been

---

<sup>36</sup>Continued from previous page...

Communism as the “extreme limit of Socialism”, seeming to favour the “two elaborate forms of non-communistic Socialism known as St. Simonism and Fourierism”; the former advocates that the industrial order should supersede old military and feudal systems and that the spiritual direction of society should pass from the Church to men of science, and the latter proposes the organization of society into *phalanstères*, or self-sufficient units, scientifically planned to maximize co-operation and job satisfaction, with the reorganisation of property ownership, marriage, and living arrangements. Mill, J.S.: *Principles of Political Economy*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1904, p. 130; first published 1848.

<sup>36</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, pp. 73 & 74.

<sup>37</sup>Marx, Karl: *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844); cited in Bottomore and Rubel, 1963, p. 18.

collecting all morning; but Doss broke the ball, and ate the beetle's hind legs, and then bit off its head. And it was all play, and no one could tell what it had lived and worked for. A striving, and a striving, and an ending in nothing.<sup>38</sup>

Marxist ideology posits production as the central human activity, but Marx warns that "(w)hen men no longer produce for their own use but for the profit of others, the works of their hands become 'fetishes' which enslave them", resulting in their alienation.<sup>39</sup> The rule of capital is, therefore, "the domination of living men by dead matter".<sup>40</sup> Just as the ball of dung becomes the fetish of the dung beetle, so Waldo's labour in the cause of Blenkins' imperialism becomes his fetish in Marxist terms; furthermore, just as the beetle is held in thrall by Doss to be exploited with total disregard to its labour and death throes, so Waldo is held in thrall and exploited by a system oblivious to his suffering. In the broader scheme of *The Story of an African Farm*, the restrictions placed on Waldo's development as colonial child replicate the metropolitan exploitation of young colonies; his inability to develop as a person is paralleled to the way in which the colony itself is denied cultural autonomy and development opportunity.

Schreiner's profile of colonial alienation derives its potency from her use of landscape. This is particularly apparent in her haunting evocation of the Karroo as the existential wastes of the human soul in the pivotal, Janus-like opening chapter of Part Two, adumbrating the underlying philosophy of the novel. Framed by an epigraph which repeats the dung beetle's demise, "And it was all play, and no one could tell what it had lived and worked for. A striving, and a striving, and an ending in nothing", the chapter re-enacts Waldo's spiritual quest for self-determination by abandoning the omniscient third person narration of Part One to plunge into the first person consciousness of the

---

<sup>38</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 74. The image of the dung beetle as a symbol of strenuous but futile effort in an imperial setting recurs in the title story of Doris Lessing's collection, *The Sun Between Their Feet*. She acknowledges her debt to Schreiner's imagery by setting her story, like the opening scenes of Schreiner's *S.A.F.*, where "the under-surfaces of the great boulders were covered with Bushmen paintings". (Triad Grafton, London, 1979, p. 160; first published in *A Man and Two Women*, McGibbon & Kee, 1957)

<sup>39</sup>Carew Hunt, R.N.: *The Theory and Practice of Communism*, Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1963, p. 51. The word "fetishisme", coined by Charles de Brosses in 1760 as a term for primitive religion, derives from the Portuguese, "feitiço", meaning sorcery or black arts. Although the word "fetish" was used by the Catholic priesthood during the Middle Ages to control the practice of magic and female sexuality, Marx adopted it in 1867 to convey the idea of primitive magic operating within the industrial economy. In 1905 Freud famously yoked the term to the idea of deviant sexuality, although Alfred Binet was "first to give fetishism sexual currency" in 1888. (McClintock, Anne: *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp. 181, 186, 185, & p. 415 n.3)

<sup>40</sup>Marx, Karl, cited in Bottomore & Rubel, 1963, p. 21.

colonial child. Whereas in Part One the narratorial voice sets out a coherent plot line, and the narrative itself is polyvocal, reflecting the farm-colony's multiplicity of nationalities, in Part Two the linear narrative is discontinued, and the move into the use of a generalized first person "we" suggests the universality of Waldo's experience. The abandonment of the linear narrative also duplicates Waldo's disorientation; the bleak spiritual landscape with no organizing influence or guidance, through which Waldo travels in search of refuge, is at one and the same time the vast emptiness of the Karroo and his own inner being:

And so, for us, the human-like driver and guide being gone, all existence, as we look at it with our chilled wondering eyes, is an aimless rise and swell of shifting waters. In all that weltering chaos we can see no spot so large as a man's hand on which we may plant our foot.<sup>41</sup>

Yet despite the starkness of Schreiner's existentialist vision and the austerity of her style in this chapter, through its transference from a macroscopic to a microscopic view of the universe, it anticipates man's accommodation with nature as a moral force and the philosophy proffered by Waldo's Stranger, a readjustment which encompasses an evocative, poetic appreciation of the miracle of life itself and the "singular beauty" of the natural world.<sup>42</sup> On closer examination, the apparently empty Karroo, "(t)he flat plain ...of monotonous red ...starts into life", and is teeming with microscopic plants and insects; likewise, a dead duck is envisioned as "a delicate network of blood-vessels ... (e)ach branch ...comprised of a trunk, bifurcating and rebifurcating into the most delicate, hair-like threads".<sup>43</sup> Waldo's *Bildung* is facilitated, therefore, by introspective quest, both to the innermost reaches of his own soul, and to the heart of nature, rather than through an exterior, physical journey.

Likewise, the arrival on the farm of Waldo's mentor, the Stranger, and the Stranger's book introducing Waldo to a philosophy with the potential to provide a rationale of life for the symbiotic child and the colony, reverses the traditional *Bildungsroman* concept of the protagonist's outward quest. In a letter to Havelock Ellis, written the year after the publication of *The Story of an African Farm*, Schreiner identifies the book as Herbert Spencer's *First Principles: A System of Philosophy* (1862). Her explanation

---

<sup>41</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 114-115.

<sup>42</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 118.

<sup>43</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, pp. 116 & 118.



that the forceful insight it brought had the impact of biblical revelation echoes the Stranger's remark, "'It was a gospel to me when I first fell on it'".<sup>44</sup>

The book the stranger gives to Waldo was intended to be Spencer's *First Principles*. When I was up in Basutoland with an old aunt and cousin, one stormy rainy night, there was a knock at the door, they were afraid to go and open it, so I went. There was a stranger there like Waldo's exactly. There was no house within fifty miles so he slept there; the next morning he talked with me for half an hour; and then I never saw him again. He lent me Spencer's *First Principles*. I always think that when Christianity burst on the dark Roman world it was what that book was to me. I was in such blank atheism. I did not even believe in my own nature, in any right or wrong or certainty. I can still see myself lying before the fire to read it. I had only three days. I always hoped I should see him again some day and tell him how he had helped me.<sup>45</sup>

Spencer's overall philosophy in his book is an "attempt to draw ethical conclusions from evolutionary principles".<sup>46</sup> He maintains that human knowledge is necessarily limited but that an unknowable power, the source of all phenomena, might be inferred; within such a scheme, life itself evolves continuously as a process of adjustment and adaptation of the interior to the exterior environment. Although the Stranger's book offers a viable alternative to Waldo's atheism, *The Story of an African Farm* suggests that this cannot function alone, and that the individual must also take a part in achieving his own destiny. The Stranger's interpretation of Waldo's carving in the allegory of the Hunter, who uses "the shuttle of Imagination" to weave a net in order to capture the Bird of Truth, depicts Waldo's search for the essential truth or philosophy through which to rationalize his existence.<sup>47</sup> However, it also serves to re-evaluate Waldo as an individual; the value recognized by the Stranger in the carving counters the negativity of Blenkins' destruction of the little machine by suggesting Waldo's intrinsic ability to carve or fashion himself, and in so doing, to adapt to the alien conditions of his environment in order to reclaim and repossess his self.

Schreiner's parallel representation of the symbiotic female/male pair, Lyndall and Waldo, draws on her exploration of male alienation under imperialism in the figure of Waldo to underline its most forceful points about female experience. The issues which alienate Waldo and inhibit his development are those which also alienate Lyndall and

---

<sup>44</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 137.

<sup>45</sup>Letter to Havelock Ellis, dated 28.3.84 (Rive, 1988, p. 36)

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) had a particular interest in evolutionary theory which he expounded in *Principles of Psychology* (1855) - four years before Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859).

<sup>46</sup>Urmson, J.O. in (eds.) Urmson, J.O. & Jonathan Rée: *Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, p. 302.

<sup>47</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 125.

inhibit her development, as both have been acculturated as colonial subjects. However, whereas the philosophies Waldo encounters have the potential to assist his development and ameliorate the life of *man-kind*, the obstacles to Lyndall's *Bildung*, and, hence, to any consequent amelioration of the lives of *woman-kind*, are not only compounded by female conditioning, but also by the absence of woman-centred philosophies or ideologies as a result of female exclusion from the elements of education fostering intellectual development.

Lyndall's insight into the mechanics of power, and her determination to escape her position of powerlessness, parallel Waldo's quest for self-realization, and are made manifest from the early pages of the novel. Within the imperio-capitalist infrastructure of the farm-colony the acquisition of property represents the route to power, but life has already taught Lyndall that, for most women, this route is contingent upon their relationship to a man, either through inheritance or marriage. She determines, therefore, to acquire an education, declaring to Em, "When you are seventeen this Boer-woman will go; you will have this farm and everything that is upon it for your own; but I ...will have nothing. I must learn".<sup>48</sup> Yet, as Schreiner demonstrates, women's learning is hampered by the absence of viable role models. The only representations of womanhood available to the young Lyndall in the farm-colony are "a gorgeous creature from a fashion-sheet" whose picture hangs in the house, and the grotesque Tant' Sannie, already twice widowed and contemplating a third husband, whose dreams of devouring sheep suggest that she devours husbands, and that she has made a good living out of marriage as a career.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, the alternatives presented to the young Lyndall illustrate how female ambition confuses acculturation as decorative doll-woman with empowerment: "When I am grown up ...there will be nothing that I do not know. I shall be rich, very rich; and I shall wear not only for best, but every day, pure white silk, and little rose-buds, like the lady in Tant' Sannie's bedroom".<sup>50</sup>

Lyndall's *Bildung* is a quest to discover the real essence of womanhood in defiance of stereotyping. Her symbolic journey, and her attempts to distance herself from the

<sup>48</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 12.

hegemonic mirrors of feminine acculturation, are expressed through a pre-eminently feminist iconography patterning, and then countering, images of female compression and entrapment. Tellingly, it is Lyndall who defies the representatives of colonial power, Tant' Sannie and Blenkins, at every turn. In an episode reminiscent of Jane Eyre's incarceration in the Red Room, and of the attempts by the child-ghost of the first Catherine Earnshaw to break *in* through the window in *Wuthering Heights*, she tries unsuccessfully to break *out* when locked in her room with Em, by hacking at the shutter with a knife and then by setting fire to the building. Indeed, when Waldo is beaten and locked in the fuel house by Blenkins it is Lyndall who defies the whip of phallic power, and feminine stereotyping, by laying aside the womanly pursuit of cutting out aprons and grasping the key from under Blenkins' nose in order to release her friend. Her seizure of the key and her proclamation "When that day comes, and I am strong, I will hate everything that has power, and help everything that is weak", endorse her defiance of male hegemony, whilst at the same time prefiguring through the sexual symbolism of keys her readiness to address as an adult the issues complicating female sexuality.<sup>51</sup>

Lyndall's recognition that female acculturation and entrapment within stereotypical roles are perpetuated through the inferiority of women's education leads her to further defiance of patriarchal authority, and a denial of male claims to intellectual exclusivity, when she refuses to ingest Blenkins' brand of education. Her journey away from home in order to acquire an education at school reverses established patterns of gender behaviour, but her greatest lesson is the discovery that women's education appears to be designed to perpetuate male ascendancy:

"I have learnt something ...of all the cursed places under the sun, where the hungriest soul can hardly pick up a few grains of knowledge, a girls' boarding-school is the worst. They are called finishing schools, and the name tells accurately what they are. They finish everything but imbecility and weakness, and that they cultivate. They are nicely adapted machines for experimenting on the question 'Into how little space a human soul can be crushed?' I have seen some souls so compressed that they would have fitted into a small thimble, and found room to move there - wide room. A woman who has been for many years at one of those places carries the mark of the beast on her till she dies."<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>52</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 151-2.

Lyndall's experience is, therefore, drawn close to that of Waldo as both are characterized as products of a system; whereas imperio-capitalism has resulted in Waldo's alienation, Lyndall's has been effected through a patriarchal production line designed to ensure both female uniformity and conformity to male requirements. The symbiotic links between Lyndall and Waldo are recalled through the phrase "the mark of the beast", connoting the demonization of women and the indelible sense of innate sinfulness which characterized Waldo's childhood.<sup>53</sup> Above all, however, the cultural constraints thwarting the full development of womanhood are manifested in physical effects. In an oblique allusion to her own asthmatic condition, believed to be psychosomatic, Schreiner suggests that patriarchal strictures quite literally stifle female intellectual growth, and are responsible for stress-induced female maladies such as claustrophobia.<sup>54</sup> On her return to the farm-colony, having been away at school, Lyndall complains, "(i)t is suffocation only to breathe the air they breathe".<sup>55</sup> Life on the farm, and by extension in the colony, has a similar effect, because she complains to Em of feeling enclosed, "I thought the windows were higher. If I were you ... I should raise the walls. There is not room to breathe here; one suffocates".<sup>56</sup>

Yet the 'machine' which bears most responsibility for female acculturation is, in Schreiner's symbology, the looking-glass. Not only does this feed back to the viewer the image which is expected to reflect and define the self, but it also reveals a 'tripled image', namely, the disjunctions between the inner self, the outer self which is imaged in the glass, and the image to which woman is expected to conform. As Lyndall argues, this process of female social conditioning before the distorting mirrors of patriarchy begins early in life and moulds women painfully and irredeemably:

"They begin to shape us to our cursed end ... when we are tiny things in socks and shoes. We sit with our little feet drawn up under us in the window, and look out at the boys in their happy play. We want to go. Then a loving hand is laid on us: 'Little one,

<sup>53</sup>The devil is often referred to as the beast; thus to bear the mark of the beast marks a person or thing indelibly as evil. Revelation, 16:2 - "And the first went and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them that worshipped his image". Revelation, 19:20 - "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone".

<sup>54</sup>The nature of Schreiner's attacks suggests that they were psychosomatic, an explanation which was investigated by Havelock Ellis. Schreiner refers to "horrible agony in her chest", saying she "suffocated if [she] ... even leaned back" and that it had been diagnosed as either "an affection of the heart" or "asthma of a very peculiar kind". (First & Scott, p. 137; letter to Ellis dated 3.7.1884, Rive, 1987, p. 44).

<sup>55</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p.152.

<sup>56</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p.149.

you cannot go...your little face will burn, and your nice white dress be spoiled.' ...Afterwards we go and thread blue beads, and make a string for our neck; and we go and stand before the glass. We see the complexion we were not to spoil, and the white frock, and we look into our own great eyes. Then the curse begins to act on us. It finishes its work when we are grown women, who no more look out wistfully at a more healthy life; we are contented. We fit our sphere as a Chinese woman's foot fits her shoe, exactly, as though God had made both - and yet He knows nothing of either. In some of us the shaping to our end has been quite completed. The parts we are not to use have been quite atrophied, and have even dropped off; but in others, and we are not less to be pitied, they have been weakened and left. We wear the bandages, but our limbs have not grown to them; we know that we are compressed, and chafe against them."<sup>57</sup>

The focus on the female foot, firstly in the child's footwear, and later in the image of the Chinese woman's crippled conformity to the aesthetics of beauty dictated by patriarchy, hints at foot fetishism whilst also reminding that women with bound feet are unable to escape. The male/female relationship is therefore revealed as incongruent, and as one in which woman is entrapped and subordinated to male sexual desire.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, women become complicit in their own entrapment as their conditioning "before the glass" teaches them narcissistic enslavement to the very image of femininity which binds them as man's sexual object. As Jenijoy La Belle indicates, in *The Story of an African Farm*, as in Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott*, the curse of the mirror is its power to govern the behaviour of women:

Lyndall, who must look in the mirror and not out of the window, resembles the Lady of Shalott. Both have to look in the glass to see the only world they are allowed. When Tennyson's Lady finally looks through the window, the mirror cracks from side to side and "The curse is come upon me," cries the Lady of Shalott. But, for Lyndall, it is when women stand before the glass that the curse begins to act upon them.<sup>59</sup>

In both *The Lady of Shalott* and *The Story of an African Farm* the warning is clear: the sanctions for female disobedience and non-compliance with the required standards of femininity are severe, and result, eventually, in the social or actual death of the female miscreant.

<sup>57</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 155.

<sup>58</sup>The metaphor of the bound female foot struck a particular resonance with feminists. Florence Nightingale uses it in 'Cassandra', written in 1852, part of an unpublished, feminist work, *Suggestions for Thought to Searchers after Religious Truth*, revised and privately printed in 1859: "Suffering, sad 'female humanity!' What are these feelings which they are taught to consider as disgraceful, to deny to themselves? What form do the Chinese feet assume when denied their proper development?" (reprinted in Ray Strachey: *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, Virago, London, 1978, p. 396; first published by G. Bell & Sons, London, 1928)

<sup>59</sup>La Belle, Jenijoy: *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988, p. 166.

According to the ideology of the male mirror, even to be old and to have lost possession of one's youthful femininity and sexual allure is to be an outcast, relegated to powerlessness in the corners of rooms and on the fringes of society. An "old woman with a wonderful bonnet" is nearly left behind in order that Lyndall, a much younger, sexually attractive woman, might occupy the only available seat on a coach.<sup>60</sup> Lyndall is haunted by the shadow of spinsterhood and social exclusion which is cast by a trick of candlelight on the farmhouse walls as "the shadow of an old crone's head in the corner beyond the clothes-horse".<sup>61</sup> In a world where women are denied the educational opportunities to relieve their financial dependency upon men, and are yet conditioned to accept that marriage is the only career option open to them, female sexual allure becomes the defining factor; it is the form of currency offered to men in exchange for marriage and limited access to the status and property enjoyed by the male partner, and it is the way in which women are obliged to try to define a sense of self, through the fracturing triple mirror image. As a form of currency, the exchange of female sexual allure commodifies women and relegates marriage to the level of prostitution, so that the maintenance of appearance becomes, in Lyndall's ironic phrase, "Professional duties":

"With good looks and youth marriage is easy to attain. There are men enough; but a woman who has sold herself, even for a ring and a new name, need hold her skirt aside for no creature in the street. They both earn their bread in one way. Marriage for love is the beautifullest external symbol of the union of souls; marriage without it is the uncleanliest traffic that defiles the world."<sup>62</sup>

In contrast to Lyndall, Em represents the retarded chance of female development because she is unable to discern the operation of patriarchal power; nor does she understand her commodification within the hegemonic system. Marriage for her is "service" carried out through the housewifely duties symbolized by items which she has accumulated for her bottom drawer. That the "spray of orange blossom, ...a ring, ...and a veil", which she has also gathered, represent the exchange of her body and even her soul, in an unbreakable, one-sided contract, eludes her.<sup>63</sup>

Schreiner's closure of the novel with Lyndall's exile outwith the colony for the birth of her illegitimate child, and her negation of the cultural mores controlling female

<sup>60</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 157.

<sup>61</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 149.

<sup>62</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 165 & 156.

<sup>63</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, pp. 146 & 148.

sexuality through her rejection of loveless marriage, adopts a narrative pattern which has since been recognized as being characteristic of the female *Bildungsroman*. Abel *et al* posit two alternative types of plotting in this genre: the first represents the process of *Bildung* as a chronological development from childhood to maturity, as in the male *Bildungsroman*, and the second shows development to maturity deferred "by inadequate education until adulthood, when it blossoms momentarily, then dissolves".<sup>64</sup> A similar process of "mythical rather than historical" awakening has also been noted by Felski in twentieth-century female *Bildungsromane*, and is, she argues, associated with images of rebirth or the heroine's divestment of the culturally applied veneers of civilization to return to "an innocent state often directly equated with that of animals".<sup>65</sup> At the close of *The Story of an African Farm*, the birth of Lyndall's baby in exile can be read as symbolizing just such a brief late flowering or rebirth: representing the future of independent womanhood outwith the patriarchal sphere, the child's swift death, followed soon after by Lyndall's, suggests that, on their own, women are unable to make the necessary changes to society to achieve female autonomy and the regeneration of new cultural mores. Her dying wish to return to the Colony and to reach "(t)hat blue mountain, far away", and her death in the wilderness parallel Waldo's demise.<sup>66</sup>

Charlotte Goodman has remarked that many female/male pairings in the female *Bildungsroman* symbolize the androgynous wholeness of the prelapsarian world prior to the ascendancy of patriarchy, so that the unification of characters shows a momentary healing of the fracture.<sup>67</sup> This healing unity, of a specifically androgynous nature, can be seen in the closure of *The Story of an African Farm* where Waldo's death unites him with the natural world and with Lyndall, his psychological counterpart. However, Gregory Rose's presence as distant onlooker at Lyndall's death endorses his role as potential facilitator of female endeavour, and healer of gender rifts. His surname connotes female qualities, and he is closely aligned with Lyndall through Schreiner's reference to both as the female exile in the wilderness, Hagar:

---

Like Hagar, when she laid her treasure down in the wilderness, he sat afar off.- 'For

<sup>64</sup>Abel *et al*, 1983, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup>Felski, 1986, pp. 139-40.

<sup>66</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 251.

<sup>67</sup>Goodman, Charlotte: 'The Lost Brother, The Twin: Women Novelists and the Male-Female Double *Bildungsroman*', in *Novel*, Vol. 17:1, Fall 1983, pp. 28-43.

Hagar said, Let me not see the death of the child.<sup>68</sup>

The curious episode in which Rose cross-dresses and assumes female identity in order to nurse Lyndall, emblemizes the necessity to break down gender boundaries and cultural constructions of gender. Yet, through Gregory, Schreiner suggests much more, because his middle name, Nazianzen, recalls St Gregory of Nazianzus, a church patriarch whose doctrine teaches that men, too, must share responsibility for sin. In undertaking a healing, womanly role, therefore, the androgynous Rose has not only adopted the travail of womankind, but he is also portrayed as a counterbalance to the sexual double standard.<sup>69</sup>

Schreiner's vision that gender inequalities might be adjusted if men were to adopt female qualities is manifested most clearly through Rose's association with the central symbol of the mirror. Like Lyndall, his catoptric moments are developmental to his understanding of self, and teach that gender is a social construct. Known for his effeminacy as a boy, and teased for being a "noodle and a milksop", he too has been moulded by patriarchal expectations, having been obliged by his father to become a farmer "instead of a minister, as [he] ...ought to have been".<sup>70</sup> His first mirror encounter is an act of self-exploration measuring the surface appearance of manliness against internal instincts and qualities. The "youthful face reflected there, with curling brown beard and hair" suggests masculinity, but the simultaneous act of inspection and introspection does not, as it "might be conceited or unmanly to be looking at his own face in the glass".<sup>71</sup> The second encounter with his mirror self, at the moment of cross-dressing, is accompanied by a similar transitory crisis of identity, "Am I, am I Gregory Nazianzen Rose?". However, his transformation, wrought with the aid of "a

<sup>68</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 251; the rose signified female selflessness in Schreiner's symbology, as in her story, 'The Woman's Rose' (first published in *Dream Life and Real Life*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1893). Hagar represents the exclusion of the fallen woman and the foundation of a new race. The slave of the biblical patriarch, Abraham, she becomes his concubine when his wife Sarai, or Sarah, is unable to conceive. Ishmael, Hagar's son to Abraham, and Hagar are exiled when Sarah miraculously gives birth to Isaac, despite her great age (Genesis 16-25; Genesis 21:16).

<sup>69</sup>St Gregory of Nazianzus (c.330-c.389) Greek theologian and Bishop of Sasima who retired to religious contemplation at Nazianzus. His focus was on Adam, rather than on Eve, as progenitor of human sin: "Gregory stops considerably short of the teaching of Augustine, though he was appealed to by the latter Father as a witness to the catholicity of his views. Gregory was far from asserting the total depravity of man or the loss of his freewill; but he held that mankind had become impaired in body and soul, and had passed into a state of condemnation, in consequence of Adam's sin". (Tennant, F.: *The Sources and Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, 1903, reprinted by University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, U.S.A., 1979, pp. 318-19)

<sup>70</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 141.

<sup>71</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 140.



little sixpenny looking-glass", indicates that under the surface men and women are very similar:

Then he dressed himself in one of the old-fashioned gowns and a great pinked-out collar. Then he took out a razor. Tuft by tuft the soft brown beard fell down into the sand, and the little ants took it to line their nests with. Then the glass showed a face surrounded by a frilled cap, white as a woman's, with a little mouth, a very short upper-lip, and a receding chin.<sup>72</sup>

*The Story of an African Farm* is a remarkable text in which Schreiner engages with the philosophy of the day to explore the basis of gender and self-identity in a poetic, wondering, and almost childlike manner. Now regarded as one of the founding texts of modern feminism, it exposes the operation of patriarchal power and asserts a feminist viewpoint at a time when 'the woman problem' was just beginning to be debated publicly. Writing in 1914, Edith Lees, the wife of Havelock Ellis, credits the novel with the rapid acceleration of the feminist cause. Her homage to Schreiner, which acknowledges the book's "inner cry ... a voice that has penetrated the intellectuality of men and forced them into facing the causes which have produced the parasite and the doll in modern civilisation", touches on the book's particular achievements.<sup>73</sup> Schreiner's critique of the hegemonic infrastructure leaves no room for doubt that female stereotyping in ineffectual roles, such as "the parasite and the doll", results from gender acculturation, and from the manipulation of a gender discourse which promotes male power whilst gratifying male demands for decorative, dependent, compliant womenfolk. As Lees points out, Schreiner's articulation of women's alienation is presented not just as a purely emotive issue, which would in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century terms relegate it to the irrational, female sphere, but as an intellectual issue engaging with the so-called male sphere of logic and rationality.

Elaine Showalter has called Lyndall "the first wholly serious feminist heroine in the English novel", and she locates the book in the feminist phase of the female literary tradition.<sup>74</sup> It is impossible to define it otherwise for, despite Lyndall's insistent feminism, Schreiner's closure indicates an inability to envision a future for women outwith the constraints of patriarchal domination. Whilst Lyndall's demise, and that of her baby, suggest the impossibility of the feminist cause, Lyndall's final moment on

<sup>72</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 238.

<sup>73</sup>Lees, Edith: *Stories and Essays*, 1914. Cited in Krige, 1968, p. 19.

<sup>74</sup>Showalter, 1999, p. 199.

earth is bound up in her looking-glass image and she dies addressing a divided self: "We are not afraid, you and I; we are together; we will fight, you and I".<sup>75</sup> Womankind therefore seems doomed to remain gazing eternally and obsessively into her own eyes in the distorting mirror of gender discourse, frozen in the collective inability to define adequately the female self.

In contrast to the pessimism of *The Story of an African Farm*, Pauline Smith's novel *The Beadle*, published in 1926, paints a more positive future for women.<sup>76</sup> Recent readings have located it as an example of South African pastoralism, but, if read alongside *The Story of an African Farm*, it becomes apparent that it is a reworking of Schreiner's themes, and that it should be regarded as a colonial feminist *Bildungsroman*. In his analysis of *The Beadle* as a representation of pre-capitalist rural life, J.M. Coetzee has remarked that whereas Schreiner's farm represents sloth, Harmonie, the farm in *The Beadle*, and its surroundings, represent industry. In his view, the centrality of women to the work ethic in the novel is a reflection of the community's need for labour following the abolition of slavery by the British. However, this also serves as a measure of the degree of control exerted upon them by white male hegemony:

Judged from the outside, and particularly from the position of an educated person, however sympathetically disposed, peasant culture can justify its manifold internal oppressions, of beasts as of women and children, only as long as it maintains an ethos of work.<sup>77</sup>

In *The Beadle*, the commodification of women, both as labourers and as the sexual objects of men, is fundamental to the text. Indeed, the gender economy of the farm and its environs is structured more subtly than Coetzee's reading might suggest, for Smith's mode of *Bildungsroman* pairing portrays the successful operation of a harmonious patriarchy within the broader patriarchal society, in order to foreground the shortcomings of the latter.

The *Bildung* of the protagonist, Andrina, is mapped in a series of rites of passage drawing her into sin but, as Karen Scherzinger has pointed out, Smith insists "on the

<sup>75</sup>Schreiner, *S.A.F.*, p. 252.

<sup>76</sup>Smith, Pauline: *The Beadle*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1989; hereafter referred to as Smith, *T.B.*; first published by Jonathan Cape, London, 1926.

<sup>77</sup>Coetzee, J.M.: *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988, p. 74.

resilience and impenetrability of Andrina's innocence".<sup>78</sup> Scherzinger ascribes this to the overarching dictates of the pastoral ethic which, she observes, links *The Beadle* to Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Yet the oppositions set up by Smith in her gendered division of Aangenaam society, and her critique of imperial interference, sexual or geographical, do not combine to paint Andrina as a purely pastoral figure. Rather, by reading *The Beadle* in conjunction with *The Story of an African Farm*, it is possible to view Andrina's innocence as Smith's feminist response to the guilt projected upon Lyndall by patriarchal ideology.

There are many surface similarities between *The Beadle* and *The Story of an African Farm*: the farm-colony in Smith's novel is suggested as trope for the colony itself, with the orphaned Andrina representing its future welfare, and it draws on biblical imagery to characterize the community and its individuals against the backdrop of the Karoo.<sup>79</sup> However, whereas Schreiner's vast landscape represents a state of existential angst, and the viability of a prelapsarian female-male unity is only auspicated at the close of her novel, Smith opens by characterizing the impoverished Aangenaam, or Pleasant valley as the Promised Land, and the appositely-named farm, Harmonie, with its luxuriant garden watered by "the River of the Water of Life", as Eden.<sup>80</sup> The leaders of the early settlers, whose names resonate throughout the novel almost as those of biblical forebears, are the "Patriarchs of the Old Testament" who have sojourned in the wilderness to reach their destination:

Through the wide open spaces of the Karoo Jan van der Merwe from Holland, Pierre de Villiers from France, moved as through eternity, conscious always of the presence of their God. They were not now Jan van der Merwe of Holland, Pierre de Villiers of France. Together they were, like Israel of old, a people chosen of God for the redeeming of this portion of the earth.<sup>81</sup>

The Aangenaam valley where the eponymous beadle serves his temporal and spiritual masters, Mijnheer van der Merwe and God, is therefore a society ordered along patriarchal lines, and is one so imbued with a sense of religiosity and patriarchal heritage that the two are almost inseparable.

---

<sup>78</sup>Scherzinger, Karen: 'The Problem of the Pure Woman: South African Pastoralism and Female Rites of Passage', in *Umtsa*, No. 2, 1991, p. 32.

<sup>79</sup>Spelling varies: Pauline Smith uses 'Karoo', and Olive Schreiner 'Karoo'.

<sup>80</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 43.

<sup>81</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 26.

As Coetzee postulates, this patriarchal order exerts a reductive form of control over women. In contrast to the book's male characters, Andrina's maiden aunts are required to eke out a sparse living from hand to mouth; they are "for ever cleaning and tidying up ...[they] kept pigs and poultry, and goats on the mountainside, and sold their produce to Mevrouw van der Merwe up at the homestead, or to the Jew-woman at the little store".<sup>82</sup> Even married life is grim for some women; the miller's wife suffers because "(t)he miller, who had been kind and stupid when he married her, was still stupid but no longer kind".<sup>83</sup> Some individuals exploit women shamelessly: Jan Beyers, in particular, personifies male greed. Seeking a wife, but unable to discern women as individuals, he sees them only as a means of accruing wealth:

"If I marry Toontje, three sheep will she bring to my kraal, and if I marry Betje, there will be in our house the sewing-machine that came to her ...Is there another young girl in the valley that would bring me three sheep or one that has a sewing machine?"<sup>84</sup>

Above all, however, the plot is dominated by the story of Andrina's seduction and abandonment in pregnancy which mirrors that of her dead mother.

As in *The Story of an African Farm*, *The Beadle's* critique of patriarchy is also an implicit critique of British imperialism. The perspective of the Boer people is privileged through a third person narrative which sets out the history of the Dutch colonizers as displaced persons in Europe and in Southern Africa. This representation of the Dutch as "a chosen people" in exile, to whom "the freeing of the slaves by the English was ...an incomprehensible act of injustice", is continually foregrounded through the biblical inflexions Smith weaves into anglicized Dutch speech.<sup>85</sup> Andrina's seduction by the Englishman, Henry Nind, is told in terms of colonial conquest; whereas he represents metropolitan hegemony, "the world which sent out judges and administrators to its colonies, and soldiers and sailors to the borders of its empire", she is characterized in terms of the land itself:

She had Klaartje's clear blue eyes, the colour of the winter sky, and Klaartje's fair, glossy hair, the colour of ripe yellow mealies<sup>86</sup>

Significantly, Nind's first visit to the valley is "to a hunt", and his return as a pupil-farmer in "an exhilaration of spirit which was almost triumph", anticipates

<sup>82</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 6.

<sup>83</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 37.

<sup>84</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 23.

<sup>85</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 26.

<sup>86</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, pp.131 & 8.

conquest and suggests him as a *Bildungsheld* bent on achieving personal development through colonial adventure and sexual encounter.<sup>87</sup> However, Smith's portrayal of Nind subverts the concept of male *Bildung* by showing him as the agent of Andrina's downfall; through his surname, which recalls Nin-Edina, she suggests him as an ambiguous Lord of Eden, either serpent or Adam.<sup>88</sup> In either event, the taint of female guilt is effectively neutralized and transferred away from Andrina, and from Eve.

Female guilt is also dissipated through the postulation of a beneficent matriarchy responsible for sustaining social nurture, rather than the supply of female servitude, alongside and in contrast to the patriarchal order in the valley-colony. This can be seen in the roles played by Tan' Linda, postmistress, marriage broker, and green-fingered propagator of the Edenic profusion of plants in the farmhouse garden, but is shown most clearly in the symbiotic pairing of Mijnheer Stephan Cornelius van der Merwe and his wife, Alida. Although Mijnheer van der Merwe is classified as patriarch of the community through his ancestry, wealth, and alignment to the church, his God resembles the God of wrath whom Waldo was unable to acknowledge: "Jehovah - the God of justice and of righteousness: the God to whom vengeance belongeth". In contrast, not only is Alida's God benign, "a God of love drawing his people towards him like little children", but Alida herself is also viewed as a godhead: "Andrina's God was a serene and beneficent being who bore a perfectly natural resemblance to Mevrouw van der Merwe".<sup>89</sup> Likewise, the Mijnheer's domain, which includes the lands outwith the immediate policies of the farmhouse, runs into the very wilderness and is consequently both exteriorized and gendered as male. Alida's demesne, however, is domestic; it encompasses both the house and its environs, and her sick visits to outlying areas with her home-made medicines and the shawl used as a shroud symbolize her ability to transcend both social and geographical boundaries.

Gaston Bachelard maintains that, in literature, houses represent the states of mind of their occupants because "(t)he house, even more than the landscape, is a 'psychic

---

<sup>87</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, pp. 15 & 17.

<sup>88</sup>According to Babylonian tradition, Nin-Edina is Lord of Eden. Tennant, 1903 & 1979, p. 346

<sup>89</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, pp. 27 & 29.

state', and even when reproduced as it appears from the outside, it bespeaks intimacy".<sup>90</sup> Indeed, those houses cherished by women, he argues, offer something special:

...housewifely care weaves the ties that unite a very ancient past to the new epoch. The housewife awakens furniture that was asleep.

...A house that shines from the care it receives appears to have been rebuilt from the inside; it is as though it were new inside. In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build a house from the outside.<sup>91</sup>

Alida's home is represented as the nucleus of her demesne, or empire, rather than enclosed domestic space. In particular, the kitchen, with its gleaming surfaces and open fire at the heart of it, not only exemplifies female industry and a passion for life itself, but it also manifests the psychic state of a caring, nurturing matriarchy where, in stark contrast to the exteriorized wilderness state of patriarchy, "no human being, white or black, ever left ...without being offered food":

The kitchen was a big sunny room with a fire-place resembling a low raised platform ...most of the cooking was done ...over an open fire in the centre of the platform. ...The shovel, the chairs against the whitewashed walls, the meal-chest, the kneading trough, the bucket-rack with its row of brass-bound wood buckets, were all, like the ceiling of the room and its doors and window-frames, made of yellow-wood grown rich in colour with age and beautiful with the constant use of years. At one end of the room was a low brass stand, brought out from Holland by the first van der Merwe who, as a Londrost in the service of the Dutch East India Company, had settled at the Cape. On this stood a copper jam-pot, shaped like a huge fish-kettle, in which preserves were still made. Above the lidded jam-pot was a deep wooden rack bright with polished copper baking-pots and pans, also of the Landrost's time and still in constant use. The scoured cleanliness of the tables and racks, the dazzling polish of the copper and brass, the deep, rich colouring of the yellow-wood ceiling, the dark mist-smearred mud floor, and the high, wide, many-paned windows, made the kitchen at Harmonie one of the most beautiful rooms in the old gabled house.<sup>92</sup>

Against this background of positive female values, Smith deploys a feminist symbology which resonates with Schreiner's in *The Story of an African Farm*, but which endorses Andrina's innocence rather than her guilt. The gifts of a dress and a mirror, which she receives from her aunts at the time of her first sacrament, mark the aunts' acknowledgement that she has attained womanhood, but it is significant that never before has there been a mirror in the house. When Andrina looks in it the first time,

<sup>90</sup>Bachelard, Gaston: *The Poetics of Space* (translated by Maria Jolas), Beacon Press, Boston, 1994, p. 72, first published as *La poétique de l'espace*, Presses Universitaires de France, France, 1958.

<sup>91</sup>Bachelard, 1994, p. 68.

<sup>92</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, pp. 12-13.

she is wearing her new dress; not only does she have no history of self-awareness, therefore, but she is also unable to recognize her self:

Was it herself she saw in that little crystal well deep within its rim of shells? Was this the Englishman's 'adorable child'? Was it those eyes, those lips, that the Englishman had kissed? Was she indeed beautiful enough, as she saw herself now, for the Englishman to love? She could not believe it. She dared not hope it.<sup>93</sup>

The fact that Andrina has remained untouched and untutored by the distortions of the male mirror counters Lyndall's looking-glass curse, and even in her first moments of *self-consciousness* Andrina remains wonderingly innocent of artifice or narcissism. Also, like Lyndall, she is associated with keys; however, because these unlock Alida's larders and canisters, rather than focusing solely on Andrina's sexual awakening, they indicate her womanly capability to run the female demesne in Alida's absence. At the point of her seduction, Andrina is further divested of any taint when her compliance in sexual communion is figured through the phraseology of religious devotion: the sharing of the coffee, which in a reversal of her mother's flight to the sinful coffee-house in Platkops she has taken to Nind, becomes "the sharing of a sacrament"; the words "her soul sang its innocent magnificat" transfigure her into the Virgin Mary, and later she is likened to "the carved angel in Platkops church".<sup>94</sup>

In contrast to Schreiner's portrayal of the father of Lyndall's child as the quiet Stranger whom she refuses to marry, Smith transposes spiritual and temporal guilt for sexual misdeeds upon the beadle. As the representative of religious rectitude he bears the sins of the church fathers for their imposition of religious doctrine, but as the unacknowledged father of Andrina he bears the sins of the father, normally visited upon the child. Just as Nind is the guilty party in Eden, so too is the beadle, and Smith likens him to Satan slipping into and out of the symbolic dark of sin: "his thoughts ...ran through his mind like snakes through the grass ...slipping out of darkness into light and out of light into darkness again".<sup>95</sup> Quite literally, Schreiner's mirror of feminine acculturation is reversed and then destroyed when the beadle is forced to confront his own image. At the very moment he is berating the sisters for dressing Andrina "as a doll for the Englishman to play with", Johanna thrusts the mirror in his face:

For a second Aalst Vlokman looked. But the face he saw was not the face of the man

---

<sup>93</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 87.

<sup>94</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, pp. 119, 118, & 136.

<sup>95</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 116.

who had taken Klaartje to Platkops dorp. It was the face of a man abandoned by his God. In a bitter desolation of spirit ...he rose from the table and left the house. His rising jerked the mirror from its rest against the dish. It slid across the table, slipped over the edge, and fell with a crash against the beadle's stool.<sup>96</sup>

Vlokman's agitation betrays his guilty complicity in Klaartje's downfall, and the shattering of the mirror suggests that the curse of the mirror, and therefore the doll-woman stereotype, can be broken in a way which Schreiner was unable to express. At the same time, his description of Andrina as Nind's plaything foregrounds the hypocritical commodification of women as sexual objects by men, because Vlokman has offered Jan Beyers two oxen if he marries Andrina.

Smith's resolution of the novel, with the pregnant Andrina's double exile from the Edenic farm, appears at first to replicate both the biblical fall and Lyndall's wilderness exile in *The Story of an African Farm*. Yet Smith transmutes Schreiner's image of stillborn feminism into something much more positive through Andrina's survival and the safe delivery of her baby, both in the care of the saintly Oom Hans, the carter who takes her across the bleak Karoo and into his own home. Not only does their journey across the gendered landscape recall Schreiner's 'Times and Seasons' passage figuring the Karoo as existential wastes, but the figure of Oom Hans himself also suggests the restoration of Schreiner's lost "human-like driver", or moral guiding force:

it was across the plain of the Great Karoo that they journeyed, and more and more did Andrina come to feel what she had felt at Uitkijk - her insignificance in this space and stillness and the strange solace that that this knowledge of her insignificance brought her.<sup>97</sup>

Whereas Schreiner portrays woman as the victim of patriarchy and the route to healing the fracture between genders as the feminization of *man* in the androgynous Gregory Rose, Smith's vision of a beneficent matriarchy has the effect of promoting womankind to the role of healing and spirituality, thereby countering expressions of female sinfulness and facilitating both female *Bildung* and agency. Andrina's reinstatement to the prelapsarian Harmonie is accomplished at the behest of Alida, established as both the community's skilled healer and as a female godhead, and the extension of her invitation to Andrina to re-enter Eden reasserts women's ability to defy stereotyping and to permeate culturally-designated gender boundaries. The future of womankind, and the welfare of the farm-colony itself, therefore lies in the empowerment of women

<sup>96</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>97</sup>Smith, *T.B.*, p. 185.



and the release of female skills, in symbiotic complementarity with the reinstatement of the redemptive patriarchal religion symbolized in Oom Hans.

Far from being sententious, Smith's proposal of a new moral order in *The Beadle* achieves a balance between female and male, and good and evil, an achievement which, as has been noted by her many admirers, derives from her spare, pared-down style, her understatement, and her lack of sentimentality.<sup>98</sup> Smith wrote of her own work that her inspiration was sociologically-based and that her "most deeply-felt interest lay with the poor and the narrowing circumstances of their lives".<sup>99</sup> Dorothy Driver has pointed out that, in "defining Andrina's character as naive", Smith works against the better interests of the poor themselves.<sup>100</sup> Yet the closure of *The Beadle* shows Andrina as a *Bildungsromanheldin* whose experiences have altered her: they have developed in her a state of knowledge, and of mature acceptance and forgiveness of the wrongs perpetrated against her, which cancel out naivety; Nind's return to England to marry his English sweetheart is "right", in Andrina's view, because mutual, rather than incongruent love forms the basis of their relationship; the beadle, too, is redeemed through Andrina's acceptance of him as her father and grandfather of her son.<sup>101</sup> It is this sense of development towards mature independence, along with Smith's distinctive style, and the novel's visionary closure rejecting marriage, which move *The Beadle* beyond the feminist era occupied by Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, and into the phase designated by Showalter as female.

---

<sup>98</sup>Arnold Bennett, who adopted Smith as a literary protégée, remarked that she had a "strange, austere, tender and ruthless talent" (obituary of Pauline Smith, *Times* 31.1.1959). On reading *The Beadle* for the first time, Bennett is said to have exclaimed, "I wish to God ... I had thought ... of this myself!" (quoted in Pauline Smith's appreciation of Bennett, A.B. '...a minor marginal note', in (ed.) Ernest Pereira: *The Unknown Pauline Smith*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1993, p. 218). Winifred Holtby also acclaimed her work, "Pauline Smith's work stands in a quite different category from that of Mrs. Millin or Mrs. Lewis. There is so little of it; it is so delicate, so exquisite, so rare. ... Katherine Mansfield saw as clearly; Charlotte Mew felt so intensely". (Holtby, Winifred: 'Writers of South Africa', in *Bookman*, No. 456, Vol. 76, September 1929). The connection Holtby makes between Mew's style and Smith's is significant because a hand copied poem entitled 'The Farmer's Bride', is listed amongst Smith's papers. Smith's handwriting has been transcribed as "Charlotte M. (Mear?) ... from *The Nation*, 3.2.1912", but the date and source correspond with the publication of Mew's poem, 'The Farmer's Wife', confirming Smith's interest in the alienating effect of rural life upon women. (Twentyman Jones, Leonie: *The Pauline Smith Collection*, University of Cape Town Libraries, Cape Town, 1982, F4)

<sup>99</sup>Smith, in (ed.) Pereira, 1993, p. 222.

<sup>100</sup>Driver, Dorothy: *Pauline Smith*, McGraw-Hill, Johannesburg, 1983, p. 25.

<sup>101</sup>Smittf, *T.B.*, p. 186.

Doris Lessing's first novel in her 'Children of Violence' quintet, *Martha Quest*, is also set against the backdrop of the Southern African veld. Published in 1952, it too is a *Bildungsroman* focusing, as her eponymous protagonist's surname suggests, on a quest for female self-determination. However, because it is the opening novel in Lessing's series, tracing Martha's life from her middle teenage years until her marriage at the outbreak of World War II, and it is not until the final book, *The Four-Gated City* (1969), that Martha's quest for individuation is successfully resolved, it represents a feminist position between Showalter's feminist and female phases. Although it first appeared in print just outwith the period covered by this thesis, I want to discuss it before moving on to discuss female *Bildungsromane* from other parts of the empire, for a number of reasons: it provides a thematic link to the novels I intend to examine in the latter section of this chapter; Lessing is a writer of considerable stature in the colonial and postcolonial literary arena; also, because she was born in 1919, her work offers chronological dimension to the evolution of the colonial women writer's literary tradition.

Lessing is widely-known to resist the label 'feminist', believing feminism to be of lesser significance in the scale of world events than other matters.<sup>102</sup> Martha's quest, which opens in Rhodesia, "is the study of the individual conscience in its relation with the collective", a theme which she was "at pains to state ...very clearly" in the opening chapter of *Martha Quest*.<sup>103</sup> In the fifth volume she moves to London, and, at the very heart of the British empire, in the course of her attempt to rationalize world politics and imperial cultural hegemony, she and a female friend descend to a symbolic basement state of being where they strip away cultural accretions in order to reconstruct themselves. It is significant, in this context, that the first chapter of *Martha Quest* points to *The Story of an African Farm* through its epigraph, taken from Schreiner, and

---

<sup>102</sup>"To get the subject of Women's Liberation over with - I support it, of course, because women are second-class citizens ...I don't think that Women's Liberation will change much though - not because there is anything wrong with its aims, but because it is already clear that the whole world is being shaken into a new pattern by the cataclysms we are living through: probably by the time we are through, if we do get through at all, the aims of Women's Liberation will look very small and quaint." Lessing, Doris: Preface to *The Golden Notebook*, 1972 and subsequent editions; *The Golden Notebook*, Flamingo HarperCollins, London, 1993, p. 8; first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1962.

<sup>103</sup>Lessing, Doris: 'The Small Personal Voice', in (ed.) Paul Schlueter: *Doris Lessing: A Small Personal Voice*, Flamingo HarperCollins, London, 1994, p. 18; 'The Small Personal Voice' first published in *Declaration*, MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1957; *A Small Personal Voice* first published by Knopf, New York, 1974.

that the opening scene shows Martha reading a work by Havelock Ellis, a close friend of Schreiner. Martha's sense of being ill at ease with colonial society can therefore be read as a latter-day reflection of the colonial child's angst in *The Story of an African Farm*:

She was adolescent, and therefore bound to be unhappy; British, and therefore uneasy and defensive; in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, and therefore inescapably beset with the problems of race and class; female, and obliged to repudiate the shackled women of the past.<sup>104</sup>

In her Afterword to a 1968 reprint of *The Story of an African Farm*, Lessing describes her debt to Schreiner and to the novel itself:

I read the novel when I was fourteen or so; understanding very well the isolation described in it; responding to her sense of Africa the magnificent - mine, and everyone's who knows Africa; realizing that this was one of the few rare books. For it is in that small number of novels, with *Moby Dick*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Wuthering Heights*, perhaps one or two others, which is on a frontier of the human mind. Also, this was the first 'real' book I'd met with that had Africa for a setting. Here was the substance of truth, and not from England or Russia or France or America, necessitating all kinds of mental translations, switches, correspondences, but reflecting what I knew and could see. And the book became part of me, as the few rare books do. ...I had only to hear the title, or 'Olive Schreiner,' and my deepest self was touched.<sup>105</sup>

For Lessing, therefore, *The Story of an African Farm* assists in overcoming colonial cultural alienation, and it is this aspect which I wish to pursue in relation to *Martha Quest* and to the remaining texts I examine in this chapter. For it is my hypothesis that, as the colonial women's *Bildungsroman* develops, it moves from the expression of what might be termed 'global' feminist concerns towards the assertion of more localised issues relating to women's identity and their claims to colonial nationality, one of the prime concerns being the creation of a body of literature relevant to the lives of women in their respective colonies. The key feature of this transition is, therefore, a thematic shift illustrating the growing importance of the role of the woman writer herself as the reflexive creator of the colonial female self.

Although Martha does not succeed in creating a unified sense of self until the closing chapters of *The Four-Gated City*, it is possible to discern the embryonic writer attempting individuation in *Martha Quest*. Like Lyndall, Martha seeks to conceptualize

---

<sup>104</sup>Lessing, Doris: *Martha Quest*, HarperCollins, London, 1993, p. 18, hereafter given as Lessing, *M.Q.*; first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1952.

<sup>105</sup>Lessing, Doris: 'Afterword' to *The Story of an African Farm*, in Schlueter, 1994, pp. 162-3; first published in Schreiner, Olive: *The Story of an African Farm*, Fawcett World Library, New York, 1968.

the female self through catoptric encounters, but, in Martha's case, this takes place not just through looking-glasses, but also "through literature" as a form of cultural mirroring.<sup>106</sup> Although the farmhouse is full of books by "Dickens and Scott and Thackeray", they leave her "with a feeling of being starved" as "(n)one of these seemed to have any reference to the farm, to the gangs of native labour, to what was described in the newspapers".<sup>107</sup> Parallel attempts to discover her self take place at a "double remove" in her parents' mirror with the aid of an angled hand mirror. This suggests a compulsion to add depth and dimension to the flat stereotypical females represented in romantic literature, and to move beyond the narcissistic sense of self she obtains from the hand mirror alone when she lies on the bed murmuring "like a lover, 'Beautiful, you are so beautiful'".<sup>108</sup> Yet even this device fails to yield a unitary self as she is only able to see her body in segmented form. Like Lyndall, too, Martha's mirror moments link to an awareness of cultural and physical binding or compression, but Martha's binding is conducted just as much by matriarchy as by patriarchy, for the evidence of her sexual development is suppressed by her mother's insistence on making for her tight-bodied dresses which flatten her "well grown" breasts.

Martha's rites of passage into womanhood are accompanied by a series of looking-glass encounters associated with the male exploitation of the female body, which result in redoubling her enslavement to the distorting mirrors of feminine acculturation rather than providing a sense of self. In defiance of matriarchal constraint, she attempts to recreate herself by sewing her own dress to go to the van Rensberg's dance, but as a result of Billy's attempts to kiss her, the white dress is soiled, "dragging heavy with red mud", a symbolic defloration which disturbs her newly-created sense of female selfdom:

A sheet of silver, inclining at the end of the room, took Martha's attention, and she looked again, and saw it was a mirror. She had never been alone in a room with a full-length mirror before, and she stripped off her clothes and went to stand before it. It was as if she saw a vision of someone not herself; or rather, herself transfigured to the measure of a burningly insistent future. The white naked girl with the high small breasts that leaned forward out of the mirror was like a girl from a legend; she put forward her hands to touch, then as they encountered the cold glass, she saw the naked arms of the girl slowly rise to fold defensively across those breasts. She did not know herself. She left the mirror ...bitterly criticizing herself for allowing Billy ...to take possession of her

<sup>106</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 17.

<sup>107</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 43.

<sup>108</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* pp. 27-8.

at all.<sup>109</sup>

All further attempts at self reconstruction by Martha are also annexed by men. Just as Joss Cohen selects the material for her dance dress, so Donovan rearranges her toilette according to his ideal of womanhood. On his first intervention, Martha feels as violated as she did at the dance, "(i)t was like being possessed by another personality; it was disturbing, and left her with a faint but pronounced distaste", but, in her desire to conform to the ideal of femininity expected of her, she permits him to do the same again later:

Donovan wiped off her makeup, and made her shut her eyes while he painted her face again. He arranged and rearranged her hair. She was compliant, but impatient. At the end, he led her triumphantly to the long mirror, and said, 'Now, then, Matty ...' Martha looked, and in spite of her pleasure, was uneasy. It was not herself, she felt. The simplicity of that white dress had been given a touch of the bizarre - no, *that* was not it; as she regarded herself, she was instinctively forming herself to match that young woman in the mirror, who was cold, unapproachable, and challenging. But from the cool, remote face peered a pair of troubled and uneasy eyes.<sup>110</sup>

The multiplicity of demands made upon her to present feminine versions of her self for male gratification, and her conditioned compliance, compound the fracturing of her self. At the club she resents not being accepted "as *herself*", yet she is unable to recognize which self to become, being "continually at sea, because of the different selves which insisted on claiming possession of her".<sup>111</sup> Even during lovemaking she is alienated from a sense of selfdom; she is externalized as an outside observer, watching as if as in a mirror:

She saw herself lying there half exposed on the bed; and half wearily, half resentfully partook, as he was demanding of her, in the feast of her own beauty. Yes, her legs were beautiful; yes, she felt with delight (as if her own hands were moulding them), her arms were beautiful. Yes, but this is not what I want, she thought confusedly; she was resenting, most passionately, without knowing that she resented it, his self-absorbed adoration of her, and the way he insisted, Look at yourself, aren't you beautiful.<sup>112</sup>

Yet despite her resentment of her commodification, the power of patriarchal conditioning is such that even on leaving the bed she automatically conforms to the image of the desirable doll-woman: "she crossed to the mirror, she glanced in from habit, and straightened herself, so that the lines of her body might approximate to those laid down by the idea of what is desirable".<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 107.

<sup>110</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* pp. 135 & 201.

<sup>111</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 212.

<sup>112</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 298.

<sup>113</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 299.

The portrayal of Martha's fragmentary glimpses of her self illustrates the inhibitions placed upon female intellectual growth, and encapsulates the contrary double impulse to flight and conformity. On the one hand Martha experiences a growing hunger for intellectual satiation, and a yearning for political resolution of social inequality, yet on the other hand she rejects the academic opportunities on hand, including a university education, because acculturation as a female and alienation from metropolitan culture make the education on offer appear irrelevant to her life. "(F)ormed by literature" as she is, she finds it impossible to reconcile "the great shout from the nineteenth century", from the intellectual and cultural centres of the world in the works of "Dickens, Tolstoy, Hugo, Dostoevsky, and a dozen others", with the racism and social injustice which surround her.<sup>114</sup> Visits to the Left Book Club, which have succeeded the left wing political histories lent to her by the Cohens, also fail to satisfy.

Politically and culturally alienated as she is, and disillusioned with a literary canon remote from the reality of colonialism, there is logic in Martha's decision to become a writer herself. Writing presents the means of refashioning herself, of contributing to the creation of a body of literature relevant to her life, and of influencing the political situation in order to achieve the utopian vision, the creation of her own imaginary world, which she has nurtured since childhood. In "the white-piled, broad-thoroughfared, tree-lined, four-gated dignified city where white and black and brown lived as equals, and there was not hatred or violence" she dreams of, it is possible to glimpse the prelapsarian resolution characteristic of female *Bildungsromane*.<sup>115</sup> Yet Lessing's critique of colonial life shows a male-dominated, imperio-capitalist infrastructure which is overwhelming in its ability to retain power: Martha's application to become a writer on the *Zambesia News* elicits the mere offer of a post on "the woman's page where she would be corrupting no one".<sup>116</sup> *Martha Quest* confirms that male power is maintained through the silencing of women and their relegation to the margins of 'real' life, where they become trapped in the stereotypical roles to which they have been acculturated.

---

<sup>114</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 226.

<sup>115</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 163.

<sup>116</sup>Lessing, *M.Q.* p. 286.

### Brilliant Careers?: Portraits of the Artists as Young Women

Together with the proliferation of mirror imagery, and the thematic importance of the development of the female self in the works discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, the shift in focus in colonial women writers' *Bildungsromane* towards the individuation of the female writer herself, and her role in creating a unique colonial identity, could perhaps be rationalized in Lacanian terms as the maturation of the infantilized female and her passage into language through the symbolic mirror phase of self-identification.<sup>117</sup> Yet, Lacan's theory is flawed because it fails to take account of the effect of ongoing experience. As Jenijoy La Belle has pointed out, for Lacan the mirror stage is "a single, originary event", whereas her own study of mirror symbolism indicates that "...for women, mirroring is not a stage but a continual, ever shifting process of self-realization".<sup>118</sup> Although Julia Kristeva acknowledges selfing to be a process, "because our identities in life are constantly being called into question", neither Lacan's theory of the mirror phase, nor Kristeva's extended reinterpretation of it, are easily accommodated alongside the interplay of power which can be seen to be taking place in the catoptric experiences portrayed in the colonial women's *Bildungsroman*.

In the novels discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, the mirror symbol is used to denote the way in which women are constructed through the eyes of men, the way in which women then construct themselves in light of male expectations, and the way in which power over women is exerted and retained through their acculturation to 'feminine' stereotypes. The theory of this process of self-visualization through the actions and reactions of others, described by the American sociologist Charles Cooley as 'the looking glass self', has been developed by proponents of symbolic interactionism, and in particular by George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer.<sup>119</sup> According to Blumer, "Symbolic interaction involves *interpretation*, or ascertaining the meaning of actions or remarks of the other person, and *definition*, or conveying

---

<sup>117</sup>Julia Kristeva gives a succinct description of Jacques Lacan's 'mirror phase' theory: "In this phase one recognizes one's image in a mirror as one's self-image. It is a first identification of the chaotic, fragmented body, and is both violent and jubilatory. The identification comes about under the domination of the maternal image, which is the one nearest to the child and which allows the child both to remain close and to distance itself". Kristeva, Julia: 'A Question of Subjectivity - an Interview', in *Women's Review*, No. 12, October 1986, p. 20.

<sup>118</sup>La Belle, 1988, p. 10.

<sup>119</sup>Cooley, Charles: *Human Nature and the Social Order*, Scribner, New York, 1902, p. 5.

indications to another person as to how he is to act".<sup>120</sup> Thus the construction of the self takes place as part of an ongoing process through social interaction with the other, with the individual interpreting and internalizing the view of self which they read in the other's behaviour. This theory explains much more satisfactorily than Lacan's the way in which the self is constructed. It allows self-realization to be conceptualized as an ongoing process, and rationalizes the dynamics of male power in a gendered setting, and of imperial hegemony in a racial setting, because the indigene, like the female, is constructed as inferior other through ongoing social interaction with the result that this view is internalized as the subject's own interpretation of a debased self.

In her book *Writing and Being*, Nadine Gordimer affords insight into the importance of writing to the construction of the colonial self, irrespective of gender. Referring to Albert Camus' protagonist, Jacques, in *Le Premier Homme*, she explains:

If he is not to be the dangling participle of imperialism, if he is not to be the outsider defined by Arabs - a being non-Arab - what is he? A negative. In this sense he starts from zero. He is the creator of his own consciousness. He is The First Man. Let us not worry about the gender: I was to come to the same necessity; to *make myself*, in the metaphor of The First Man, without coherent references, up on his own two legs, no model on how to proceed.  
...Colonial: that's the story of who I am.  
The One who belongs nowhere.  
The One who has no national mould.  
...because I was a writer, my principal means of making myself was my writing.  
...my writing became the 'essential gesture' of the writer to her or his society of which Roland Barthes speaks.<sup>121</sup>

Yet in taking Camus and Barthes as models for her own 'gesture' of literary self-fashioning, Gordimer exemplifies the paradox for colonial and postcolonial writers. Her attempts to formulate a sense of *colonial* selfhood are defined for her readers through the cultural norms which she is attempting to resist. The cultural hegemony of the metropolitan centres of Europe therefore not only serves to establish many of values of colonial settlers, but it also conspires to construct a distorted sense of self just as the tripled mirror of patriarchy serves to construct gender. The colonial subject's efforts to construct her/himself are hampered by the disjunctions between the her/his inner awareness, the image to which she/he is expected to conform through acculturation as

<sup>120</sup>Blumer, Herbert: 'Sociological implications of the thought of George Herbert Mead', in *American Journal of Sociology*, No. 71, 1965-6, pp. 535-44.

<sup>121</sup>Gordimer, Nadine: *Writing and Being*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1995, pp. 121-132.



subjects of the British empire, and the image of the colonial subject as peripheral or marginalized, as she or he is represented by the metropolis.

For colonial women writers this process is further complicated by issues of female subjectivity. The 1986 book, *A Double Colonization*, brackets all women in colonial and postcolonial societies together, claiming that they are doubly colonized.<sup>122</sup> As Robin Visel points out, this term does not take account of white female complicity in colonialism, and she suggests: “(w)hile the native woman is truly doubly-oppressed or doubly colonized, by male dominance as well as by white economic and social dominance, the white settler woman can best be described as half-colonized”.<sup>123</sup> Yet although it is invidious to attempt to compare the social emplacement of, say, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Oodgeroo Noonuccal, as black indigenous postcolonial writers, to the social emplacement of Doris Lessing or Katharine Susannah Prichard, as writers from white settler communities, as Gordimer indicates, issues of belonging and locating a stable or coherent self remain crucial for white writers, as do considerations of nationhood and nationality. For white women writing when colonialism was at its height, arguably these issues were of greater consequence because women were under greater social and cultural constraints during that period, because of cultural obeisance from the colonies to the metropolis, and because respective senses of national identity had yet to be forged across the various colonies of the empire. In this context, therefore, the process of writing becomes, like the shattering of Andrina’s mirror immediately after imaging the beadle, the means of laying bare, or mirroring, the nature of patriarchy, and a way of reversing the hegemonic process through redefinition of the subject by shattering cultural constructions of femininity and working “from zero” to construct a new female sense of self.

Miles Franklin’s novel, *My Brilliant Career* (1901) focuses on these very issues.<sup>124</sup> It explores the role of literature in creating a national consciousness, subverts the mythologization of the Australian bush as heroic male space and the masculine bush

---

<sup>122</sup>Petersen, Kirsten Holst & Anna Rutherford (eds.): *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women’s Writing*, Dangaroo Press, Mundelstrup, 1986.

<sup>123</sup>Visel, Robin: ‘Half-Colonization: The Problem of the White Colonial Woman Writer’, in *Kunapipi*, Vol. X, No. 3, 1988.

<sup>124</sup>Franklin, Miles: *My Brilliant Career*, Virago, London, 1980; hereafter given as Franklin, *M.B.C.*; first published by Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1901.

ethos of mateship, and claims physical space in the bush and Australian nationality for Australian women. In doing so Franklin also requisitions female literary space within the upsurge of phallogocentric 'bardic nationalism' of the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>125</sup> This nationalistic embodiment of an assertively masculine culture appears to have taken inspiration from the Australian centenary celebrations of 1888, and, as Leon Cantrell explains, it "enshrines the spirit" of the final decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>126</sup> To understand the impact of Franklin's novel it is helpful to look briefly at the way in which nationalism found expression in the works of the painters of the Heidelberg School, discussed below, and in the poems, short stories and sketches by *Bulletin* writers, such as Henry Lawson and 'Banjo' Paterson. The genre, epitomizing rugged masculinity and mateship, was highly popular. Lawson's first collection, *While the Billy Boils* (1896), ostensibly a compendium of bush yarns told around the camp fire, achieved high sales despite the fact that many of the stories anthologized had been previously published in the *Bulletin*, the journal known as 'The Bushman's Bible'.<sup>127</sup> Although the travails of bush life are stressed, white male mastery and self-sufficiency are the watchwords of the genre, and the gendered bush is romanticized as the 'real' Australia, despite the fact that "(b)y 1891 two-thirds of Australia's population lived in the cities and towns rather than in the bush".<sup>128</sup>

The male painters of the Heidelberg group also contributed to the creation of an Australian rural mythology. Like many of the paintings discussed in Chapter One, their work testifies to the interaction between the controlling male gaze and gender discourse. On the one hand, they ennoble man as conqueror of the land and the forces of nature, crediting him as creator of a new utopia no matter how apparently humble his role.<sup>129</sup> For example, Tom Roberts' painting, *The Breakaway* (1891; fig. 3.1),

<sup>125</sup>I have borrowed the phrase 'bardic nationalism' from Katie Trumpener's study of the "bard as a figure of cultural situatedness" on the Celtic fringe; although her work relates to the romantic novel's reworking of the nationalist debates of the late eighteenth century in British literature, the role of the cohort of Australian bush writers appears to me to be very similar. (Trumpener, Katie: *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997, p. xv)

<sup>126</sup>Cantrell, Leon (ed.): *Writing of the Eighteen Nineties: Short Stories, Verse, and Essays*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1991, p. xviii.

<sup>127</sup>Lawson's first collection, *While the Billy Boils*, sold 32,000 copies within twenty years, and a verse collection, *In the Days when the World was Wide*, which was also published in 1896, sold 20,000 copies by 1914. (Cantrell, 1991, p. xiii)

<sup>128</sup>Astbury, Leigh: *City Bushmen: The Heidelberg School and the Rural Mythology*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, p. 2.

<sup>129</sup>The Heidelberg School derives its name from the Melbourne suburb, named Heidelberg, where the artists met to paint *en plein air*, and where painting camps were held.

epitomizes male mastery of land and beasts in his depiction of a single horseman arresting a stampede of sheep, whilst the boundaries and clearings in the background testify to the taming of a potentially hostile environment. A pair of companion paintings, also by Roberts, *The Golden Fleece: Shearing at Newstead* (1894; fig. 3.2) and *Shearing the Rams* (1890; fig. 3.3), mythologize the work of stockmen and shearers by evoking an earlier Golden Age and their role in the ongoing saga of the realization of Australia's bountiful resources. *Shearing the Rams* foregrounds the three ages of Australian manhood - youth, vigour, and old age - connoting a historic past in the sprightly older man, the prosperous present in the fleece being stripped from the plump sheep by the man in his middle years, and the bounteous prospects for the future in the youth's glad aspect and armful of wool; the strength and dedication in the workers' faces as they address their tasks, and their physiques as they master the rams, suggest a country in its prime.

On the other hand, just as there is no apparent place for women in the bush literature, neither is there a role for them in the male-gendered landscape of the Heidelberg paintings.<sup>130</sup> Even in the heart of the bush, man is almost unfailingly portrayed as a survivor, in contrast to the female of the species. Frederick McCubbin's *On the Wallaby Track* (1896; fig. 3.4) shows a woman sitting passively on the ground against a tree, baby across her lap, apparently so exhausted by her experiences that she is unable to cradle her child in her arms or to lift her averted head. In contrast, nearby, her husband appears to be in his natural habitat; his competence is underlined by his association with the bush icon, the billy, as he kindles a fire, and by his proximity to the heroicizing golden sunlight piercing the tangle of the wilderness in the middle distance.

---

<sup>130</sup>Most of the Heidelberg painters were men. There were two women associated with the group, Jane Sutherland and Clara Southern, but their work remains in relative obscurity. They are rarely exhibited alongside their male counterparts, nor are their paintings reproduced as icons of 'Australian-ness' as the men's are. In a recent volume dedicated to Australian women artists there are no paintings by Clara Southern, and only one by Jane Sutherland, 'A Cabbage Garden'. Unlike the paintings by the male painters of the group, which represent women as decorative and/or frail, this shows a sturdily-built, plainly-clad woman bent double and harvesting cabbages. (Caroline Ambrus: *Australian Women Artists: First Fleet to 1945: History, Hearsay and Her Say*, Irrepressible Press, Woden, A.C.T., 1992, plate 15, p. 191) Ambrus remarks of Sutherland that because "her depictions of women at work diverged from the belief that women were the idle and decorative playthings of men ...her work failed to find ready acceptance with the public and the art world which regarded the work of male artists, and masculine concepts, as being superior to that of the female". (Ambrus, 1992 p. 38)

In the less threatening surroundings of farm and homestead, the figures of women are invariably shown, as in Charles Conder's *Springtime* (1888; fig. 3.5), adjacent to boundaries but on the cultivated, rather than on the wilderness side. Like a slightly later painting by Conder, *Herrick's Blossoms* (1889; fig. 3.6), it represents women and the land as being under the careful, possessive stewardship of man. Both paintings figure woman as analogous to the countryside, cultivated as the receptacle of man's seed for the propagation of a new generation of Australians: in *Springtime*, the plough is angled towards the woman and child in the foreground; in *Herrick's Blossoms*, the ambiguous title, and the decorative style, conjoin the trees and figures as Herrick's possessions, and as potentially fruitful.

It is against such insistent chauvinism that Miles Franklin's first person narrator, Sybylla, makes her spirited outburst in *My Brilliant Career*. It is an extraordinary book which playfully subverts the romantic poesy of male bush literature, whilst simultaneously aligning the female protagonist to bush culture and to Australianness. Written under a male pseudonym, her identity as female is exposed by Henry Lawson's Preface to the book which simultaneously endorses the work as "painfully real", but deprecates the "girlishly emotional" parts, declaring it to be the work of a "little bush girl".<sup>131</sup> Franklin's own Introduction teases the reader from the start by locating the book in the bush tradition, claiming "(t)his is not a romance ...but simply a yarn - a real yarn" but forewarning:

Do not fear encountering such trash as descriptions of sunsets and whisperings of wind. We (999 out of every 1000) can see nought in sunsets save as signs and tokens whether we may expect rain on the morrow or the contrary, so we will leave such vain and foolish imagining to those poets and painters - poor fools! Let us rejoice we are not of their temperament!<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup>Franklin's full name was Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin. Throughout her writing career she was at pains to conceal her identity behind a series of pseudonyms, including 'William Blake', 'Miss S. Mills', or 'Miss S. Miles'. Unpublished letters in the Blackwood Archive at the National Library of Scotland confirm that she and her fellow Australian writer, the novelist and poet Mary Fullerton, acted as agents for one another other in order to maintain their anonymity. (N.L.S. Blackwood Folio No. 30608, letters from Blackwood's dated 4.11.31, & 7.1.32 to 'Miss S. Mills'.) Lawson became involved in placing *My Brilliant Career* with his publisher, the Edinburgh firm of Blackwood's, after Angus and Robertson rejected it. When the book became a best-seller, George Robertson annotated the letter from Franklin which had accompanied her original submission, "This was dealt with during my absence from Sydney. It was the one *serious* mistake of our publishing dept". Letter to Angus and Robertson dated 30.3.1899; Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, B.G.C. 135.

<sup>132</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*

Contrarily, but in keeping with Sybylla's jocular style, the final paragraph of the novel begins "The great sun is sinking in the west, grinning and winking knowingly as he goes ...The gorgeous garish splendour of sunset pageantry flames out ...the clouds fade to turquoise, green and grey".<sup>133</sup> Likewise, as the plot develops, and despite rejecting the element of 'romance', Sybylla's *Bildung* appears on the surface to take place in relation to a series of would-be lovers with avowedly romantic aspirations. Yet these apparent inconsistencies are in keeping with the tone of the text because they serve to underline the twists and turns of the plot, and Sybylla's flirtation with a series of different literary traditions which have no real relevance for the Australian female, nor space in which to reflect her experience.

In particular, the ups and downs of Sybylla's *Bildung*, her ironically-termed brilliant career, interact with and subvert both the European fairy story tradition and the classic male *Bildungsroman*. This variant of the female *Bildungsroman* has been noted by Abel *et al*:

The tensions that shape female development may lead to a disjunction between a surface plot, which affirms social conventions, and a submerged plot, which encodes rebellion; between a plot governed by age-old female story patterns, such as myths and fairy tales, and plot that reconceives these limiting possibilities; between a plot that charts development and a plot which unravels it.<sup>134</sup>

In the case of *My Brilliant Career*, the tension and rebelliousness derive from the disjunctions between the poverty-stricken background of Sybylla's parental home, requiring her to work on the farm as hard as any man, and her elevation to the idyllic Caddagat, her grandmother's farm, and acculturation as a 'lady' under her aunt and grandmother's tutelage; but friction also ensues from her own wholehearted embrace of Australian identity. These elements, according to nationalist cultural tradition, are mutually exclusive, as Sybylla herself points out, "Grannie remarked that I might have the spirit of an Australian, but I had by no means the manners of a lady".<sup>135</sup>

The surface plot maps, in fairy tale terms, Sybylla's rags-to-riches-to-rags story. Just as fairy tales provide a suitable model for her own *Bildungsroman*, so stock characters from fairy tales present themselves as positive and negative female role models.

---

<sup>133</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 232.

<sup>134</sup>Abel *et al*, 1983, p. 12.

<sup>135</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 114.

Arriving at Caddagat, she is surrounded by reminders of the doll-woman stereotype to which she must aspire in the persons of her grandmother and aunt Helen, and the "beautiful portrait ...[of] a lovely girl in the prime of youth and beauty".<sup>136</sup> Tellingly, Sybylla fails to recognize this as a representation of her mother prior to her fall into marriage and poverty, for her mother has now become a Cinderella in reverse, being "thin and careworn and often cross", and so the picture serves as a double-edged reminder to Sybylla of what she too might become.<sup>137</sup> Aunt Helen also provides a bifurcated role model highlighting the vacuity of fairy tale plots that posit marriage as the 'happy-ever-after' resolution for women; on the one hand, she functions as Sybylla's fairy godmother, supervising her Cinderella-like transformation from menial to beauty worthy of a suitor, but ironically, although she oversees Sybylla's commodification as marriageable object, she has been "humiliated and outraged in the cruellest way" by her husband and she now occupies a literal no-man's land as abandoned wife, "neither wife, widow, nor maid".<sup>138</sup>

Like Martha Quest's, Sybylla's *Bildung* comprises several journeys, both physical and developmental, and the outward journey from home, with its break from parental influence, is matched by an inner voyage into sexual awareness. However, whereas Martha learns the spellbinding potency of the mirrors of feminine acculturation, making her malleable to men's desire, Sybylla's confrontation with these very mirrors is an awakening to sexual awareness, giving her agency and empowering her new self. Her Cinderella-like transformation into beauty is achieved as if through their magical influence, by dint of the symbolic act of reversing one to the wall and covering another over for the period of a month; but at the moment of revelation she discovers that she is endowed with the sibylline power to bewitch men, which she proceeds to do, and her serial testing of the mettle of varying degrees of masculinity in a series of flirtations becomes a further way of mirroring her own power.

Indeed, many of Sybylla's meetings with her "first, ...last, ...only *real* sweetheart" are laden with psycho-sexual implications and are concerned chiefly with the female rebuttal of male control. The first episode, involving a further reversal of the Cinderella

<sup>136</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 43.

<sup>137</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 14.

<sup>138</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 49.

convention and of gender symbology, also foregrounds the sexual double standard, for it takes place when her true status is disguised by gardening clothes, a servant's "dilapidated old dress".<sup>139</sup> In a curious interchange of gender power, Harold Beecham wields a stock whip around Sybylla's head whilst she stands her ground as she has done before with uncle Jay-Jay. Consequently Harold is coded as thoroughly masculine through his "exceedingly dexterous" ability with the whip, symbol of the phallus and the gendered Australian bush.<sup>140</sup> At the same time, Sybylla is revealed as defiant in the face of phallic power, and as being equal to the Australian male. Much of Sybylla's enjoyment, therefore, comes from usurping the role normally accorded to men, and from her ability to control; she concedes: "It amused me greatly for I saw that it was he who did not know how to manage me, and not that I couldn't manage him".<sup>141</sup> Despite this, she succumbs to the double impulse of flight away from and into the stereotypes of feminine acculturation and romantic novels: when Harold tries to kiss her, she grasps the riding whip herself and lashes him, but then almost swoons at the enormity of her crime, all the while seeking his retribution and authority, "Oh, that Harold would thrash me severely! It would have infinitely relieved me".<sup>142</sup>

The surface plot charting Sybylla's romantic progress is shadowed by a subversive secondary plot outlining her intellectual career as a writer. Claiming to know "of every celebrity in literature, art, music and drama", she has proved her worth as an able and assiduous story teller with a "fertile imagination" in the stories she made up for her sister at home, and in the submission of a subsequently rejected manuscript "to the leading Sydney publisher".<sup>143</sup> The bookshelves at Caddagat provide further models which she might adopt, in the form of the female stereotypes in *Trilby* and Corelli, and in the eclectic literary modes from Europe and Australia represented by "Byron, Thackeray, Dickens, Longfellow, Gordon, Kendall, ...Caine, Paterson, and Lawson".<sup>144</sup>

<sup>139</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 75.

<sup>140</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 77.

<sup>141</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 78.

<sup>142</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 125.

<sup>143</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, pp. 34, 33, & 29.

<sup>144</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, pp. 43 & 52. Sybylla's less well-known authors require glossing: George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894), tells of artist's model, Trilby O'Ferrall, who succumbs to the influence of Svengali, promoter of her career as a famous singer. Such is his power over her that when he dies her voice and career languish. Marie Corelli (pseud. of Mary Mackay) published romantic melodramas; Adam Lindsay Gordon was an Australian poet and balladeer; Henry Kendall was an Australian lyrical poet; Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine is remembered as the writer of popular sensation novels; Andrew Barton 'Banjo' **Continued on next page...**

Sybylla's attraction to the arts, and to literature, is, like Martha's, a means of discovering the female self independently of male control and of national stereotypes. Her rejection of Everard Grey's Svengali-esque offer to promote her in a "brilliant career" as an actress, is, therefore, a repudiation of the female surrender to male control portrayed in *Trilby*, and a tacit rebuttal of his offer of marriage.<sup>145</sup> This is matched by her final, more open, refusal of Harold's proposal, which she recognizes offers her "everything - but control", and which she precedes with a confession revealing more about Australian male values than about her:

"I am queer ...I am given to something which a man never pardons in a woman. You will draw away as though I were a snake when you hear.

...I am given to writing stories, and literary people predict I will yet be an authoress."<sup>146</sup>

Franklin's closure, with Sybylla's outright rejection of marriage as an easy 'career' option, her double fall from the Edenic pleasures of Caddagat, firstly as a governess at the culturally impoverished M'Swats, and then into the grind of hard work and dire poverty at her parents' farm, forecloses any prospect of prelapsarian unity between genders. Yet it is a frank statement of female independence which, along with the final paragraphs of the book, strikes an optimistic note for the future of women's literature in Australia. Drawing on Ellen Moers' work, Susan Gardner has described women's relationship to the countryside as a "loving possession without expropriation and despoilation", but she stresses that Sybylla's relationship to Australia is more profound than this, it is a "rapturous union".<sup>147</sup> The landscape, and the hitherto rarely-expressed sensation of being an Australian woman at one with the bush, are central to Franklin's characterization of Sybylla:

How the sunlight blazed and danced in the roadway - the leaves of the gum-trees gleaming in it like a myriad gems! A cloud of white, which I knew to be cockatoos, circled over the distant hilltop. Nearer they wheeled until I could hear their discordant screech. The thermometer on the wall rested at 104 degrees despite the dense shade thrown on the broad old verandah by the foliage of creepers, shrubs, and trees. The gurgling rush of the creek, the scent of the flower-laden garden, and the stamp, stamp of a horse in the orchard as he attempted to rid himself of tormenting flies, filled my

---

<sup>144</sup>Continued from previous page...

Paterson was an Australian poet in *Bulletin* tradition, and author of 'Waltzing Matilda'; Henry Hertzberg Lawson was an Australian short story writer and *Bulletin* 'bard'.

<sup>145</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 64.

<sup>146</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, pp. 223 & 222.

<sup>147</sup>Gardner, Susan: 'My Brilliant Career: Portrait of the Artist as a Wild Colonial Girl', in (ed.) Carole Ferrier: *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1992, p. 42.



senses. The warmth was delightful. Summer is heavenly, I said - life is a joy.<sup>148</sup>

It is significant that at this point Sybylla has beside her books by her favourite bush poets, Gordon, Kendall, and Lawson; but it is Franklin's description through her protagonist's consciousness which paints the scene, evokes her pleasure, and connects with the land, rather than a description filtered through the gendered verse of the bush bards.

Although Sybylla's reverie takes place upon the verandah, an enclosed area commonly designated as female space in painting and literature, she defies the protocols of bush literature by transgressing the visible and invisible gender boundaries in the muscular, masculinized outdoor life of her country. Unlike the women portrayed at the slip rails in bush ballads, and in the domestic enclosures and fowl-yards of the Heidelberg paintings, she rears poddies, climbs trees, falls in lakes, and traverses the bush, stock whip in hand, deeply involved with all that goes on there. Immediately before the verandah scene she has even driven through twenty thousand sheep, in the absence through illness of the effeminate Frank Hawden.

It is, therefore, possible to read the apparent contradiction between the denial of "beautiful sunsets" in Sybylla's Introduction and the "great sun winking in the west" of her closing paragraph not as a contradiction at all, but as a development in the submerged plot of the writer's *Bildung*. Sybylla's open challenge to patriarchy and female subjection asserts independent womanhood: she teasingly locates her tale in the bush genre, with herself as the subversive heroine, asserting the exuberant right to Australian nationality, and to the bush itself, with the words, "I am proud that I am an Australian, a daughter of the Southern Cross, a child of the mighty bush".<sup>149</sup> Yet Franklin's self-conscious discussion of literary genre in *My Brilliant Career* succeeds in achieving more than this assertion of nationality, because it focuses on Sybylla's right to describe the bush, its denizens, and its sunsets, in her own inimitable fashion. As a result, the phallogocentric discourse of Australian bardic nationalism is subverted and Franklin claims space for women and their literature within the bush genre.

---

<sup>148</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 136.

<sup>149</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 231.

The final novel which I wish to discuss in relation to the evolution of the literary consciousness of the colonial woman writer is *The Godwits Fly* (1938), by the New Zealand writer, Robin Hyde.<sup>150</sup> In some ways this bears a superficial resemblance to a novel which intervenes chronologically, Henry Handel Richardson's *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910), as both interrogate the three-cornered relationship between female acculturation, the academic education propagated at girls' schools, and the cultural dominance of the metropolis.<sup>151</sup> Like Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*, Richardson's novel, set in Australia, and Hyde's, set in New Zealand, can more correctly be termed *Künstlerromane*, rather than *Bildungsromane*, as they follow the formative years of female protagonists who learn that their alienation can only be resolved by resisting their acculturation and by becoming writers themselves in order to create the new literatures they crave. However, although *The Getting of Wisdom* is not sufficiently different from *My Brilliant Career* or *The Godwits Fly* to warrant a close examination here, I do want to focus briefly on its closure. Like Sybylla's assertion of independence at the end of *My Brilliant Career*, and her parting words, "With much love and good wishes to all - Good night! Goodbye!", Richardson's heroine also makes an exuberant exit into a self-defined freedom.<sup>152</sup> On leaving school, she casts off the trappings of female conditioning and respectability, her hat and her gloves, and runs away in an unladylike manner down the street, until she is "lost to sight".<sup>153</sup>

The expression of release from entrapment at the close of these two novels, has a bearing on my reading of *The Godwits Fly* and Robin Hyde's symbology of flight and enclosure. In an article about New Zealand writing, published a year before she died, Hyde says of fellow writer, Katherine Mansfield:

People say K.M. ran away from New Zealand, but if you could see and understand her exact environs, you might sympathize with the belief that she ran away from a sham England, unsuccessfully transplanted to New Zealand soil, and utterly unable to adapt itself to the real New Zealand. They have cut down all the pine-trees in the street where she lived, in order to give her a memorial consisting of flat grass garden beds and a red brick waiting shelter. Running away from that sort of thing is the most understandable

<sup>150</sup>Robin Hyde's name was Iris Guiver Wilkinson; she adopted her stillborn illegitimate son's name as her nom-de-plume.

<sup>151</sup>In her Introduction to *The Getting of Wisdom* Germaine Greer remarks, "H.G. Wells, quite rightly thought the book a masterpiece". Richardson, Henry Handel: *The Getting of Wisdom*, Virago, London, 1981; hereafter given as Richardson, *T.G.W.*; first published by William Heinemann, London, 1910. Richardson's full name was Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson.

<sup>152</sup>Franklin, *M.B.C.*, p. 232.

<sup>153</sup>Richardson, *T.G.W.*, p. 233.

thing in the world.<sup>154</sup>

*The Godwits Fly* is a semi-autobiographical novel, centring on the problems of cultural relocation, of finding and identifying with the "real New Zealand", even for families who have lived there for several generations, and of expunging the petty gentility of "sham" Englishness in order to create a new and distinctive New Zealand culture. Hyde's central symbol, the godwit, a migratory bird dividing its time between New Zealand and Northern Europe, emblemizes the inbred impulse to look to England for a sense of self, on the one hand, and cultural disorientation induced by being suspended between two identities, on the other.

Just as Hyde deprecates the cutting down of the pine trees to build a memorial shelter to Mansfield, she deplores the depredations of imperialism and its commercial interests, and resultant obliteration of the countryside and of any form of native culture, which have compounded the problems of cultural transmigration for white New Zealanders. The godwit's New Zealand counterpart in the novel is the tui, the "bird-of-my-native-land" about whom Eliza learns to sing at school. Yet it has vanished; "none of the children had ever seen one, or a kauri tree either", and the real New Zealand culture, "(s)omething there had been, something delicate, wild and far away ...Maoris, godwits, bird-of-my-native-land", is elusive, illusory, and tellingly, is enclosed elsewhere, "shut out behind the doors of yesterday, lost beyond the hills".<sup>155</sup> The genuine interest in, and concern for, Maoris which Hyde expresses in her journalism, is suggested in her curious conflation of indigenous peoples as an endangered species alongside New Zealand fauna.<sup>156</sup>

Eliza is riven by cultural polarities, and her *Bildung* takes place on three transecting planes: as a woman, as a New Zealander, and as a writer. However, her female and national identity can only be realized by coming to an accommodation with the false

<sup>154</sup>Hyde, Robin: 'The Singers of Loneliness', in *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, Vol. 7, no. 1, August 1938, p. 19.

<sup>155</sup>Hyde, Robin: *The Godwits Fly*, University of Auckland Press, Auckland, 1970, pp. 32 & 33; hereafter given as Hyde, *T.G.F.*; first published by Hurst & Blackett, London, 1938.

<sup>156</sup>In a piece for New Zealand Authors' Week, April 1936, Hyde wrote: "The Maori had no written history, but he had something you have not - a knowledge that continuity is sacred to the race. There isn't a Maori who can't tell you his 'begats' - his generation, his tradition. Sometimes I see old people passing in Auckland streets, funny old women in towering flowery bonnets, old brittle gentlemen with bristly white chins. I want to run after them and say, 'What was your story? What did you see?' All that is our living fibre, and we're jettisoning it - for what?" (in eds. Gillian Boddy & Jacqueline Matthews: *Disputed Ground: Robin Hyde, Journalist*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1991, p. 326)

promises of childhood experience, and writing her own reality. Like Sybylla, Eliza's consciousness has been shaped by European culture and fairy tales, but in Eliza's case, fairy tale magic represents her *Bildung* towards female self-realization as a journey from illusion to disillusion. Her early enchantment, then disenchantment, with the Glory Hole, the neighbours' cellar where, she was told, fairies live, becomes a symbol of the perils of believing the legends of patriarchal discourse:

Suddenly she knew that all her life she had never really believed in fairies, and she had always wanted to. Little sheeny iridescent wings, bodies like floating bluebells ... Once, in a Magic Cave, she had been taken to a sparkly place and told, 'This is the Fairy Queen and her fairies'; but they weren't, they weren't. They were only big girls dressed up in muslin, and their faces were pink and hot, and the stars on their wands were cardboard silvered over. They smiled and looked apologetic.  
...Bob tells lies, thought Eliza. ...he was pretending, like a grown-up.<sup>157</sup>

The Glory Hole comes to represent a series of disillusionments attendant on the process of maturation: in Carly's Glory Box, or bottom drawer, it symbolizes both the emptiness of male promises when Carly's fiancé breaks their engagement, and the bleak prospects for fairy tale happy-ever-after marriage when, like Em in *African Farm*, the female partner is conditioned to view it solely in terms of homemaking and servitude to male needs by accumulating "doilies, table-centres, nightgown-tops with patterns of lilac and violets, camisoles".<sup>158</sup> Eliza's optimistic belief in social mythologies is invariably disappointed: her confirmation into religion fails to meet its promise: "When the Bishop lays his hand on your head. Something Wonderful will happen to you. ...But when the Bishop laid his hand on her head, nothing happened at all though other people, with other touches, had made her tremble".<sup>159</sup> Her first kiss is "(t)he Glory Hole again", and even of her first lover she is tempted to record, "'(h)aving a lover isn't much to write home about'".<sup>160</sup> Much of Eliza's illusion and disillusion is related to enclosure within conditioned response, symbolized by the sparkly Magic Cave, the Glory Hole, the Glory Box, and even the Wonder Boxes which arrive filled with gifts from Grandmother-in-China, who sends all manner of exotic toys to the other children, but "Eliza was the one who came off badly, because John had written ...that she was very studious, and after that, she nearly always got little books of views, or John's old school prizes".<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>157</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* pp. 6-8.

<sup>158</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* p. 14.

<sup>159</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* p. 90.

<sup>160</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* pp. 111 & 198.

<sup>161</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* p. 38.

Eliza's understanding of 'home' is central to the novel, and her renegotiation of the constricted definitions of this proves to be her real *Bildung*. However, her perspective is skewed by the schism between culturally projected 'reality' and experience. In consequence, both New Zealand itself, and her sense of national identity, become obscured. The dichotomy is represented by the divisions between her parents and their diametrically opposed ideologies of empire. Whilst her father is a "Red Fed", her mother is a fervent imperialist unable to locate herself in New Zealand psychologically. She uses a semblance of 'English' gentility to counter grinding poverty, as they flit between lodgings and rented houses, and is fixated on the idea of her real 'home' in "beloved, unattainable England" where her idealized house is "like a Greek cross, just outside the New Forest".<sup>162</sup> Academic education, too, perpetuates the problems of cultural location because, like Eliza's mother, it serves only to provide role models which retard the chance of development. Christened 'Little Ease' by Eliza, the school itself epitomizes exclusion from society and imprisonment within a culture which is not home. The education on offer provides as little comfort as its prison namesake through its fragmentary and cramping irrelevance to young New Zealanders: "They could have the leg of frog for science, the half of a nasal accent for French, Bowdlerism for literature. But they never glimpsed the whole of anything".<sup>163</sup> Above all, the tripled mirror of Eurocentric education images a culture unrelated to colonial lives which provides its own disillusion:

You were English and not English. It took time to realize that England was far away. And you were brought up on bluebells and primroses and daffodils and robins in the snow - even the Christmas cards were always robins in the snow. One day, with a little shock of anger, you realized that there were no robins and no snow, and you felt cheated; nothing else was quite as pretty.<sup>164</sup>

Eliza's development as a writer is also trapped between cultures and conditioned to migrate, godwit-wise, towards England. One of her early poems, based on Masefield's 'West Wind', begins "It's a far way to England ...", and depicts an imaginary reunion between the cultural exile, "he who never knew them" who "(h)as yet his home to seek" and the essential Englishness of a hitherto unseen countryside, represented by iconic white cliffs, green lawns, and hawthorn which "Glimmers by English stiles". Challenged to explain the phrase "scars of pain" in the final verse, Eliza responds:

---

<sup>162</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* pp. 84, 25, & 101.

<sup>163</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* p. 108.

<sup>164</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* p. 34.

don't you think we live half our lives in England, anyhow? I was thinking - there can't have been anything quite like this since the Roman colonists settled in Britain: not the hanging on with one hand, and the other hand full of seas. Wouldn't we be different there, more ourselves?<sup>165</sup>

Hyde's own title for this poem, 'That Journey Home', which is omitted from the novel, plays upon the colonial ambivalence of 'home', and indicates the psychic distance to be travelled in order to articulate what 'home' really means. In her posthumously-published autobiography, *A Home in this World*, written just after completing *The Godwits Fly*, Hyde says:

I know now what I am looking for. It is a home in this world. I don't mean four walls and a roof on top, though these I have never had ... As often as not ... four walls and a roof get in the way, are the very point where one is fatally side-tracked from ever having a home in this world. I want a sort of natural order and containment, a centre of equipoise, an idea - not a cell into which one can retreat, but a place from which one can advance: a place from which I can stretch out giant shadowy hands ....<sup>166</sup>

Thus for Hyde/Eliza in *The Godwits Fly*, the articulation of home and self run parallel; the 'home' she seeks is the place where she is more herself. Her *Bildung* is accomplished through the inner journey towards this sense of home, or accommodation with the self, and is manifested through her development as a writer.

In the course of this journey she becomes able to express a newly-acquired sense of New Zealand identity independently from the clichés of Englishness to which she has previously resorted. In her Author's Foreword, Hyde situates the novel in her protagonist's consciousness, but the young Eliza is unable to articulate what she sees: "England is very beautiful, she thought, staring at a tree whose hair ...not properly flowers ...was the colour of fire. And this also is very beautiful". Much later in her narrative she can now describe with clarity and fluidity, "the lissom sunlight slipping down through the boughs on each, and on the queer, lonely kingdom of sticks and stones, new ferns and last year's broken bottles".<sup>167</sup> For Eliza, this capacity to evoke the landscape linguistically is both her means of empowerment and her means of realizing another self. When the "incontrollable, incompassible power" she recognizes as "It" deserts her, it returns to accommodate itself within her, and to give her a sense of accommodation, with renewed force:

---

<sup>165</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.* p. 101;

<sup>166</sup>Hyde, Robin: *A Home in this World*, Longman Paul, Auckland, 1984, p. 10. Although published in 1984, this was written in April 1937; *The Godwits Fly* was written over a period of two years with the final draft being sent to the London publishers in March 1937; it was published in 1938.

<sup>167</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.*, pp. xviii & 117.

When she was alone, words ran in her mind, measured themselves, a steady chain of which no link was weak enough to break. Long ago, she had called the power 'it.' It was years since her poems had fallen into a foolish little rubble of shards and ashes, schoolgirl sentimentality. This was different. It was the old power back again; but with a stronger face, an estranged face, it sat down in the house of her mind.<sup>168</sup>

Eliza's final poem in *The Godwits Fly* flows from this; whilst it acknowledges European genetic heritage, it expresses female empowerment in relation to a landscape bearing no resemblance to the landscapes of her earlier work. Instead it conveys a four-square sense of belonging to, and possessing, the land:

She stands an instant in the sun  
Athwart her harsh land's red and green -  
Hands of a serf, and warrior eyes  
Of some flame-sceptred Irish queen.<sup>169</sup>

Hyde's vision of home as the place where the fully-realized self is properly located, and as a place not of retreat but of self-expansion and advance out of the constricting Glory Hole and boxes of Eliza's childhood, is reflected in Eliza's expression of female maturation, "Most women never grow up, others are born that way. No, it's ourselves we reach out for ...our own undiscovered selves".<sup>170</sup> This sense of expansion foregrounds further differences between Showalter's findings and mine. According to Showalter, the female phase, to which Hyde, Franklin, and Richardson most assuredly belong, is one of "courageous self-exploration", of retreat within "a separatist literature of inner space", where "the suffragette cell" becomes, like Mrs Dalloway's narrow bed at the top of the stairs, representative of "a separate world, a flight from men and from adult sexuality".<sup>171</sup> In contrast, *My Brilliant Career*, *The Getting of Wisdom*, and *The Godwits Fly* articulate the female protagonist's development as movement outwards from the body, rather than an inward retreat, and show her not only encompassing her surroundings and evolving a sense of being at home in place, but also locating herself firmly as part of the colonial countryside itself. Ellen Moers says of women writers and landscape:

At least the brilliant landscape writing that women have devoted to open country should give pause to the next literary critic who wants to pronounce literary women

<sup>168</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.*, pp. 114 & 210.

<sup>169</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.*, stanza 1, p. 228; this poem is 'The Farmer's Wife', published in Hyde's first book of poems, *Desolate Star*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Auckland, 1929 (Hyde, *T.G.F.*, n. 1, p. 240)

<sup>170</sup>Hyde, *T.G.F.*, p. 137.

<sup>171</sup>Showalter, 1999, p. 33.

housebound, and the next psychologist with a theory about 'inner space'.<sup>172</sup>

In turning to writing as the means of realizing the female self, Franklin, Richardson, Hyde, have released their heroines from the narrow, constricting mirrors trapping Lyndall and Martha in eternal introspection, and have moved them towards to a new sense of self-awareness predicated upon self-creation in relation to the country and to nationality.

§§§

---

<sup>172</sup>Moers, Ellen: *Literary Women*, Women's Press, London, 1978, p. 262; cited by Gardner, in (ed.) Ferrier, 1992, p. 42.



## Chapter 4

### “History, real solemn history...”: Re-imag(in)ing the Empire

“But history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in. ...it tells me nothing that does not vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all - it is very tiresome: and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention ...and invention is what delights me in other books.”<sup>1</sup>

§§§

Although Jane Austen wrote some time before the emergence of feminism as a recognizable force, and long before organized consciousness-raising campaigns for the rights of women, Catherine Morland's deprecation of historical discourse in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, in the epigraph above, focuses with remarkable prescience upon the key issues addressed by twentieth century feminist historians in relation to women and history. As Catherine points out, history is phallogocentric: not only does it serve to augment and reflect the actions of men, thereby effectively rendering women invisible, but, as her twin reference to popes and kings, and wars and pestilences indicates, it functions both as a record and an endorsement of male hegemony and male concepts of periodicity. Indeed, as she indicates, history itself is just another discourse functioning as a distorting mirror of patriarchy, and as such is liable to charges of invention, bias, and fallibility.

In her seminal work on women, patriarchal history, and the feminist consciousness, Gerda Lerner shows that male dominance of historical discourse has been a powerful tool for patriarchy:

Until the most recent past, these historians have been men, and what they have recorded is what men have done and experienced and found significant. They have called this History and claimed universality for it. What women have done and experienced has been left unrecorded, neglected, and ignored in interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

Women have been effectively silenced and excluded by this aspect of hegemonic discourse and their achievements have been largely unrecognised. Consequently it has been part of the project of twentieth-century feminism to claim a place in history for women and their endeavours; yet there is ongoing debate about what constitutes

---

<sup>1</sup>Austen, Jane: *Northanger Abbey*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, p. 84; first published 1818.

<sup>2</sup>Lerner, Gerda: *Women and History: Vol. 1, The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, p. 4.

women's history and what the parameters for such a history, or histories, might be. Early feminist histories, such as the monumental *History of Woman Suffrage* initiated by the American feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage and completed by Ida Husted Harper, and Ray Strachey's *The Cause*, elevated campaigning women to the public gaze and gave credibility and impetus to the women's movement by documenting the struggle for women's rights.<sup>3</sup> However, such histories are often criticized for their focus upon the lives and work of white middle-class women, and for the failure of these accounts to shake free from the boundaries established by patriarchal histories.

Lerner's examination of the problems faced by those attempting to redefine and to write women's history identifies different levels in approach. The first, which she names 'compensatory history', resembles the early feminist histories mentioned above, as it seeks to document the achievements of "women worthies". However, the significance to feminists of this type of history is often diluted as women are frequently deemed worthy of inclusion only because their work has been judged within a patriarchal frame of reference and has been approved because they have conformed to a certain extent with male values. A further level she identifies as 'contribution history' as it links women to the achievements of others, but this results in the diminution of female achievement for it fails to analyse the real essence of the contribution certain women have made. For example, Lerner cites the case of Margaret Sanger, who is often "seen merely as the founder of the birth-control movement, not as the woman raising a revolutionary challenge to the centuries-old practice by which the bodies and lives of women are dominated and ruled by man-made laws".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, both 'compensatory history' and 'contribution history' tend towards a negative focus upon women's lives and achievements by positioning them as the victims of patriarchy. Whilst these forms of history do succeed partially by raising awareness that national and world histories suppress 'herstories', or the stories of women, thereby identifying history as one agency of patriarchal power, Lerner suggests alternative approaches to historiography are necessary both to encompass variable denominators in women's

<sup>3</sup>Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, Susan B. Anthony, & Matilda J. Gage: *The History of Woman Suffrage*, 6 vols., Fowler and Wells, New York, 1881-1922; Strachey, Ray: *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, G. Bell & Sons Ltd., London, 1928.

<sup>4</sup>Gerda Lerner: *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981, p. 147.

lives, namely race, class and ethnicity, which in turn will assist in posing the correct questions to construct "a history of the dialectic, the tensions between the two cultures, male and female".<sup>5</sup>

Following from this it is apparent that feminist projects to reinstate those women writers who enjoyed acclaim in their lifetimes but who have disappeared from view in the male constructed and dominated literary canon, also benefit from such breadth of approach as they are likely to be viewed as restrictive and restricted if they depend upon 'compensatory' or 'contribution' history alone. In the introduction to this thesis, I point out that Elaine Showalter's powerful case for the existence of a female literary tradition, *A Literature of Their Own*, provides a ready template for my examination of women's colonial writing, but I also signal my intention to develop her argument into fresh areas of debate and to challenge the metropolitan bias of her study which tends to elide all women's literature and women's literary history into one entity. Interestingly, although Showalter is concerned with documenting women's literary history, she does not broaden the contemporary feminist preoccupation with women's history and historicism into an interrogation of the texts under discussion as female discourses of history and as feminist challenges to patriarchal historicism. However, it is both possible and necessary to do so. Not only does a close examination of women's colonial writing which considers colonial feminist writers as historians of the empire disclose the history of the dialectic between male and female cultures, but it also releases another history, namely that of the contemporaneous criticism of imperial practice.

These histories prove to be enlightening for they expose the interlinked mechanisms of imperial and patriarchal power, but, even more importantly in the context of this thesis, the process of recovery foregrounds the parallels between the characteristics of the colonial feminist literary response and those manifested in the work of postcolonial writers. Clare Midgley argues that postcolonial theory offers historians "two crucial insights": the way in which the "production of dominant forms of knowledge about the colonized provided an important basis for the exercise of imperial power", and the way in which "Imperial History was - and to some extent remains - a key form of colonial

---

<sup>5</sup>Lerner, 1981, p. 159.

discourse".<sup>6</sup> In his analysis of the psychology of imperialism and colonialism, Frantz Fanon is careful to foreground the intersection between history and imperialism, arguing that the denial of culture and history both silences and subjugates the colonial subject:

Perhaps we have not sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.<sup>7</sup>

Thus historical discourse is not only acknowledged as an agency of patriarchal hegemony in the male/female dialectic, but it is also exposed as a significant instrument of imperial power and oppression.

Indeed, just as feminists of the twentieth- and early twenty-first century are finding that the recuperation of women's history is constrained by the framework of patriarchal values, patriarchal historical discourse, and traditional methodology, so postcolonial societies find that their release from the thralldom of a monolithic imperialist historicism and the residual colonial culture is similarly blocked. Midgley argues that although "post-colonial theory has effectively deconstructed Imperial History as a powerful form of colonial discourse ...it has nevertheless provided few tools for reconstructing alternative histories of imperialism". This she ascribes to "doubts about the possibility of non-Eurocentric historiography", and to "assertions of the impossibility of retrieving the voices of the colonized".<sup>8</sup> Whilst this not only appears to echo Lerner's call for new methodological approaches to historicism to provide impetus to the recuperation and collation of women's histories, it also concurs with Edward Said's demand for new analyses "at the vulnerable conjunctural nodes of ongoing disciplinary discourse" in order to recuperate "(w)hat was neither observed by Europe nor documented by it" in the field of postcolonial studies:

What ...has never taken place is an epistemological critique at the most fundamental level of the connection between the development of a historicism which has expanded and developed enough to include antithetical attitudes such as ideologies of Western imperialism and critiques of imperialism on the one hand, and on the other, the actual

<sup>6</sup>Midgley, Claire (ed.): *Gender and Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup>Fanon, Frantz: *The Wretched of the Earth* (translated by Constance Farrington), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, p. 169; first published as *Les damnés de la terre*, by François Maspéro, France, 1961.

<sup>8</sup>Midgley, 1998, p. 5.

practise of imperialism by which the accumulation of territories and population, the control of economies, and the incorporation and homogenization of histories are maintained.<sup>9</sup>

It would be simplistic to suggest that the counter-discourse of certain colonial women writers could fulfil *all* the requirements of Said's recommendation, because the perceptions and understanding of these writers are inevitably filtered through Anglo-Celtic consciousnesses, and because, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and others have pointed out, there are dangers in attempting to speak for the silenced colonial subject. Nevertheless, it is my contention that an interdisciplinary study of literary material produced by early feminist writers in the colonies offers the opportunity to examine critiques of imperialism and the development of patriarchal historicism against the background of the consolidation of imperial acquisition, imperial warfare, colonial rule, and the hegemony of the twin imperial-colonial discourses of history and literature.<sup>10</sup> Such a study at the "conjunctural nodes" of the different disciplines of gender studies, literature, history, and postcolonial studies not only releases fresh perspectives on colonial, indigenous, and feminist histories, assisting both in the construction of non-Eurocentric histories and in the retrieval of the voices of the colonized, but it also provides an additional understanding of the dynamics of imperial and patriarchal power.

This chapter therefore examines the way in which two colonial women writers, Frances Ellen Colenso and Olive Schreiner, engage in historico-political writing to offer resistance to imperialist versions of history at a time when few women were acknowledged as serious writers of history. The phrase "historico-political" for this mode of writing is appropriate in both cases, as the writers make it clear that it is their avowed intention to enter the arena of political debate and to influence public opinion through the retelling of history from a different perspective. It is of particular interest that in each case the writer uses a fictional form in which to enfold the political message. Colenso attempts to restore the reputation of her close friend,

---

<sup>9</sup>Said, Edward: 'Orientalism Reconsidered', in (eds.) Francis Barker *et al.* *Europe and Its Others: Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, Vol. I*, University of Essex, 1984, pp. 24 & 22.

<sup>10</sup>Within the term 'literary material' I include any item written by colonial women which contributes to a counter-discourse of imperialism or colonialism, namely works of history, fiction, or poetry, and personal writing such as letters, diaries and journals.

Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony Durnford, in *My Chief and I* (1880).<sup>11</sup> This is an adventure story told from the perspective of a male first person narrator, 'Atherton Wylde', purporting to be an ex-soldier and friend of Durnford's, following the slur of cowardice levelled against Durnford as a result of the bungled Bushman's River Pass affair during the Langalibalele outbreak in 1873, and his implication by Lord Chelmsford in the annihilation of British troops at Isandlwana in 1879, where Durnford himself met his death in action.<sup>12</sup> In the course of telling Durnford's story, Colenso condemns the actions of the colonial government and also attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of the African tribesmen with whom he worked, the Putini, otherwise known as the Ngwe. Although her work predates Schreiner's allegorical *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897) by almost twenty years, the trajectories of both texts are similar.<sup>13</sup>

It is, at this stage, relevant to question why Colenso and Schreiner adopted fictional modes through which to approach historico-political issues. Each of them had published previously, each was to go on to publish subsequently, and each had a range of modes of writing at her command. Colenso was a versatile writer, having produced a romantic novel, *Two Heroes* (1873), privately under the pseudonym 'Zandile', and a number of short stories which appeared in the Southern African press. However, Colenso's publication of *My Chief and I* (1880) pseudonymously, does not appear to have been for the concealment of her own identity for political purposes because it was immediately followed by the publication, under her own name, of two histories of the Zulu War which challenged the official version of events, *The History of the Zulu War*

---

<sup>11</sup>Colenso, Frances: *My Chief and I*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1994; hereafter given as Colenso, *M.C.I.*; first published by Chapman and Hall, London, 1880, under the pseudonym 'Atherton Wylde'. Frances Ellen Colenso (1849-1887) was a daughter of Bishop John William Colenso (1814-83), first Bishop of Natal, best remembered for his controversial support for dispossessed Africans, and Sarah Frances Colenso (1816-93). Frances E. Colenso's close friendship with Durnford, was never publicly acknowledged as a romantic attachment as he was already married. Anthony William Durnford (1830-1879) was commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1848, and married in 1854. He served in Ceylon and Malta before his arrival in Natal, in 1871. Having accompanied the mission to the coronation of Cetewayo ('Cetshwayo', king of Zululand), he became interested in the welfare of African races. In 1873, the year of the Bushman's River Pass affair, he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel; the action which is reported in detail in *My Chief and I* took place the following year. In 1877 he was appointed a member of the commission convened to investigate Zulu grievances, and in 1878 was promoted to the position of colonel in command of no. 2 column which included 'native' troops.

<sup>12</sup>M.J. Daymond: Introduction, *My Chief and I*, p. 21. For consistency, I use the current spelling 'Isandlwana', although Colenso employs the nineteenth-century 'Isandhlwana', and, contemporaneous documents, recorded by Colenso in her sequel to *My Chief and I*, *Five Years Later*, refer also to 'Isandula'.

<sup>13</sup>Schreiner, Olive: *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1926; hereafter given as Schreiner, *T.P.H.*; first published by T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1897.

and *Its Origin* (1880), and *The Ruin of Zululand: An Account of British Doings in Zululand Since the Invasion of 1879, Vols. I & II* (1884-5). Rather it is clear from her Preface to *My Chief* that she wrote the book in 1875 and suppressed it until 1880 because, although Durnford collaborated by supplying her with the facts, he requested her not to publish it during his lifetime. Its publication in the guise of what might be called 'faction' today, under the male pseudonym 'Atherton Wylde' following Durnford's death, therefore not only protected her reputation by obscuring her close friendship with a married man, but also testified to the veracity of the facts, through the eyes of a supposedly independent male narrator who claimed to have witnessed the events reported in the book which, as a woman, Colenso herself could never have done.

Schreiner, perhaps, had most to lose by challenging both gubernatorial and public enthusiasm for imperialism, because she had already built her reputation as a writer with her highly acclaimed novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, followed by collections of allegorical short stories in *Dreams* (1890) and *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893), and her income depended upon the success of her writing. She had already moved into the arena of political commentary with *The Political Situation* (1896), written in tandem with her husband, S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner. However, the contentious content of *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* risked the expense of a libel suit, as well as her credibility and reputation as a writer of substance. Despite this, her correspondence indicates that having conceived the idea of the book she was unable to let it go, or to alter it.<sup>14</sup>

Flora Annie Steel's main reason for writing her novel, *On the Face of the Waters* (1897), about the Indian uprisings, or 'Mutiny', discussed in detail in Chapter Five, suggests a further explanation for Colenso and Schreiner's choice of fiction as the form suited to historico-political content of their work. Steel's examination of the 'Mutiny'

---

<sup>14</sup>Olive Schreiner wrote of the genesis of *T.P.H.*: "the other morning I woke, and as I opened my eyes there was an Allegory full fledged in my mind! A sort of allegory story about Matabeleland"; "I have been copying out a little bit of my Allegory story about Mashonaland. It's curious but I would give hundreds of pounds if that story had never come to me, and now I feel I must publish it. It will make Rhodes and the Chartered Company very bitter against me and all conflict is so terrible". When working on *T.P.H.*, Schreiner disclosed, "I'm not fit. I've had two miscarriages and am for the present stone-broke". (Letters to Betty Molteno, dated August 1896 & 30.9.1896, and to W.T. Stead, dated 20.9.96, in Rive, Richard (ed.): *Olive Schreiner: Letters: Vol. I, 1871-1899*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1988, pp. 288 and 290)

was particularly successful, she believed, because it was a subject “to touch all hearts, to rouse every Britisher’s pride and enthusiasm. The Indian Mutiny was then the Epic of the Race”.<sup>15</sup> In writing about the ‘Mutiny’, Steel was, therefore, engaging with a topic of mythic proportions which reverberated within the discourse of history, and in the public imagination, with such resonance that it had taken on iconic significance.

Hayden White affirms that historical narratives do generate particular iconographies:

The narrative itself is not the icon; what it does is *describe* events in the historical record in such a way as to inform the reader *what to take as an icon* of the events so as to render them ‘familiar’ to him.<sup>16</sup>

Yet as a discourse, as White points out, history is iterated by historians who “speak” for the facts “and fashion(...) the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is - in its representation a purely discursive one”.<sup>17</sup> In this respect, he argues, historical narrative is an extended metaphor governed by the writer as producer which “does not reproduce the events it describes; it tells us in what direction to think about events and charges our thoughts about the events with different emotional valences”.<sup>18</sup> Following from this, history can therefore be conceptualized as a discourse which seizes upon events and presents them iconographically in order to persuade the audience towards the view of events held by the narrator. As White points out, “the clue to the ‘meaning’ of a given historical discourse is contained as much in the *rhetoric* of the description of the field as it is in the *logic* of whatever argument may be offered as its explanation”.<sup>19</sup> Thus, in order to understand any given historical discourse it is necessary to examine the rhetoric deployed and to engage with what White calls the “tropological strategies” of the text.<sup>20</sup>

It is my contention that Colenso and Schreiner used fictional modes to reflect alternative versions of history not only because they were consciously engaging with

<sup>15</sup>Steel remarks that *On the Face of the Waters* “sold like hot cakes”. First published in Britain in October 1896, it was reprinted in November 1896, December 1896, January 1897, and February 1897. Initially, Steel decided not to publish the book in the United States as royalties of 10% were offered, whereas she wanted 12%. However, encouraged by the book’s success in Britain, she published it privately in the U.S., at her own expense; the “success of the book was immediate”, so that she not only recouped her outlay of £400, but also managed to negotiate royalties of 12%. (Steel, Flora Annie: *The Garden of Fidelity: The Autobiography of Flora Annie Steel, 1847-1929*, Macmillan, London, 1929, pp. 227 & 225)

<sup>16</sup>White, Hayden: *Tropics of Discourse*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1978, p. 88.

<sup>17</sup>White, 1978, p. 125.

<sup>18</sup>White, 1978, p. 91.

<sup>19</sup>White, 1978, p. 106.

<sup>20</sup>White, 1978, p. 125.



the iconic nature of historical rhetoric, but also because they recognized that the tropological strategies of historical discourse, its myths and metaphors, propelled imperialism. Indeed, fictional forms permitted them to break free of historical rhetoric by probing and exposing the inherent inconsistencies of its tropology, and by deploying counter-tropes of their own. As women were not acknowledged as writers of history, and were therefore largely excluded from and by history, polemical counter-discourse in one of the many journals of the day was likely to be regarded as ephemeral; whereas by entering the arena of popular fiction during the age of literature, Colenso and Schreiner were almost certainly guaranteed a wider and more enduring readership profoundly interested in all matters relating to imperialism. Indeed, by submerging their political messages within fictional genres, they were also subverting the popular, fictional, adventure stories of empire.

Crucially, theirs are not typical feminist interventions, as they do not attempt to reclaim female history or to celebrate female achievement. Rather, their texts are an acknowledgement that imperialism is sanctioned by the twin discourses of history and literature. In doing so, they focus on three main concerns: firstly, they expose patriarchal history as an unreliable discourse responsible for authorizing and propelling imperialism; secondly, they confront the physical and cultural displacement of indigenous populations and support minority rights; finally, having discredited the distortions of 'history', they reflect alternative versions of events in the colonies, and an alternative vision of relationships with indigenous peoples, to the metropolitan centre.

### **Figures of Imperialist Rhetoric and Masculinist Impostures**

The tropes and myths of imperialist rhetoric can be seen as interacting with five main overlapping spheres of discourse: those of history, militarism, religion, race, and gender. As I have shown in Chapter Two, the discourse of Christianity is highly influential in shaping the discourse of gender. I discuss the discourse of race in more detail in Chapter Five, but for the moment I wish to explore briefly how nineteenth-century Christianity also contributed to the formulation of stigmatizing tropes which accrued to the discourse of race and racism. Patrick Brantlinger links philanthropic antislavery campaigns to the rise of imperialism and points out that they

“economically conditioned” Britain because, by insisting upon the abolition of slavery, Britain was able to capitalize on early industrial growth which enabled her to compete successfully against overseas competitors who were largely dependent upon slave labour.<sup>21</sup> Yet, paradoxically, by constructing African peoples as the helpless and primitive dependants of Western philanthropy, antislavery literature stimulated interest in Africa and its population, thereby sponsoring the drive to open up Africa and imbue it with Western ‘civilization’. Not only was the imposition of Christianity seen as the most ‘civilizing’ and beneficial element of Western culture which could be accorded to the indigenous peoples of the burgeoning empire, but this view also appeared to be confirmed by Darwinian theories of evolution and natural selection which posited black peoples, and especially those in Africa, as undeveloped and therefore childlike. In turn this served to empower anew the discourse of Christianity, with its biblical tropes of Christian paternalism and light-bringing to authorize white superiority and to disperse the perceived taint of racial darkness redolent of the mythical Dark Continent in the Africa of the Victorian imagination, so that the discourse of Christianity itself was employed both as the justification of, and as the tool of, imperialism.

Yet proselytization was fraught with contradictions. Whereas the ‘native subject’ was frequently represented as childlike and naive, she/he was often also imaged as either belonging to the ‘noble savage’ or the ‘wild man’ stereotype. Therefore on the one hand indigenous peoples were perceived as possessing the characteristics of human infancy such as dependency, innocence, vulnerability, and the potential to develop to what was seen as a more advanced state, whilst on the other hand they were dehumanized by a rhetoric which cast them as irredeemably savage or wild and therefore denied them that potentiality. Even allowing for the vestigial remains of a pre-Rousseau dogma of original sin associated with the state of childhood, the rebarbative tropes of savagery or bestiality were problematic as they simultaneously urged the necessity for the benefits of ‘civilization’, whilst also appearing to preclude ultimate salvation through conversion to Christianity.

---

<sup>21</sup>Brantlinger, Patrick: ‘Victorians and Africans: the genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent’, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No.1, Autumn, 1985, p. 167. British slave trade ended 1807/8; abolition of slavery on British-held territory 1834-8.

Moreover, despite the fact that the underlying motives of proselytizers were humane, they maintained an uneasy relationship with the commercial interests organizing black labour. Not only was the advance of missionary activity dependent to a certain extent upon the infrastructure which commerce was able to provide, but also, as Anne McClintock points out, settlers in South Africa in particular "brought with them ... the remnants of a three-hundred-year old British discourse that associated poverty with sloth" which was closely associated with the control of the "unruly poor".<sup>22</sup> Therefore the discourse of Christianity saw the provision of work, and the work ethic, as beneficial and even as morally improving, whereas idleness spelled degeneracy; yet if indigenous peoples were indeed to be encouraged to work for white colonizers and were held to be less than human, then the questions of ownership confronted during the antislavery debates were again brought to the fore, so that despite the abolition of slavery, the end result was that often indigenous workers were regarded as little better than slave labour.

Within the discourse of imperialism, Christianity became the strange bedfellow of militarism. This can be ascribed to the growth, during the nineteenth century, of a cult of Christian virility whose various aspects are described as 'muscular Christianity', 'Christian manliness', and 'Christian militarism'. Pointing out that 'Christian manliness', a phrase used by the clergy, differs from 'muscular Christianity', as the former emphasizes Christianity whereas the latter focuses upon the body, Donald E. Hall states that the "central, even defining characteristic" of muscular Christianity is "an association between physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself".<sup>23</sup> The works of Charles Kingsley, and Thomas Hughes' book, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), are particularly associated with muscular Christianity.<sup>24</sup> However, although Kingsley wrote to Hughes of the "manly

---

<sup>22</sup>McClintock, Anne: *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Routledge, New York, 1995, p. 252.

<sup>23</sup>Hall, Donald E. (ed.): Introduction, *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup>The phrase 'muscular Christianity' is attributed to T.C. Sanders, reviewer of Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago* (1857); writing in *The Saturday Review* he says, "We all know by this time what is the task that Mr. Kingsley has made specially his own - it is that of spreading the knowledge and fostering the love of a muscular Christianity. His ideal is a man who fears God and can walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours - who, in the language which Mr. Kingsley has made popular, breathes God's free air on God's rich earth, and at the same time can hit a woodcock, doctor a horse, and twist a poker around his fingers". Cited in Hall, 1994, p. 7.

*thumos*”, or “rage” which he claimed to be “the root of all virtue”, and which David Rosen glosses as the primal, volcanic inner source of a “sanctified, fierce male behaviour” which was almost animalistic, Rosen notes that both Kingsley and Hughes were aware of inherent dangers in their philosophy, and that they attempted to curb those who might use it as a warrant to engage in, or to incite, violence.<sup>25</sup>

‘Christian militarism’, on the other hand, a term used by Olive Anderson to refer to “the diffusion of the idea of the ‘soldier-saint’” and the ‘Christianization’ of the army during the nineteenth century, does appear to sanction violence; it fuses together the moral ethics and virility implicit in ‘Christian manliness’ with the notion of forcefulness purveyed by ‘muscular Christianity’, to underpin an ideology that justifies the engagement in warfare of a fighter ennobled, and even sanctified, by his support of a just cause.<sup>26</sup> As Anderson indicates, from the time of the Crimean War onwards, the army progressively accepted the influence of Christianity, both as a means of improving the common soldiery and their lot, and as a means of rationalizing the supreme sacrifice which many of them were required to make by laying down their lives for their country. By the middle of the 1860s, the figure of the Christian soldier was well established in the public imagination. A key influence was Catherine Marsh’s *Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars, 97th Regiment* (1855), a popular gift book, which, according to Anderson, “became a classic text-book of the religious war party” and:

offered professional soldiers biographical proof that a man of their own day could be a zealous Christian without being any the less good a soldier, and, more important still, it demonstrated to their families and the wider, earnest public that there was already a godly minority in that sink of iniquity, the British army, and left them to conclude from this that the rest could and should be ‘Christianized’.<sup>27</sup>

Popular hymns cited by Anderson, including ‘Onward, Christian Soldiers’ (1864), also confirm the way in which the general public embraced the trope of the Christian

---

<sup>25</sup>Rosen, David: ‘The volcano and the cathedral: muscular Christianity and the origins of primal manliness’, in Hall, 1994, p. 30.

<sup>26</sup>Anderson, Olive: ‘The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain’, in *English Historical Review*, 86, 1971, p. 54. Anderson also uses the term ‘Christian militarism’ to include the setting up of institutions, such as the Boys’ Brigade, the Church Army, and the Salvation Army (between 1878 and 1883), by religious and quasi-religious bodies in Britain, in order to proselytize, guide, and support various sectors of the population. These institutions subscribed to the rhetoric of Christian militarism because they were organized along military lines. (Anderson, 1971, p. 66)

<sup>27</sup>Anderson, 1971, pp. 48 & 49; Marsh’s book sold 70,000 copies in its first year after publication and later appeared as juvenile editions.

soldier.<sup>28</sup> Thus the three ideologies, 'muscular Christianity', 'Christian manliness', and 'Christian militarism', not only combine to support the rhetoric of imperialism, but they also indicate how imperialist rhetoric was able to harness the rhetoric of Christianity to promote and authorize the spread of imperialism itself, because the exertion of force over indigenous peoples was seen as both justifiable and desirable in order to overcome the forces of darkness and to convert the heathen to Christianity. In order to encapsulate and express this potent combination I have coined the phrase "muscular imperialism".

The overlapping spheres of discourse which simultaneously endorsed the propagation of Christianity, imperialist expansion, and the employment of force or 'ethical warfare' in pursuit of these aims, also utilized a series of tropes and figures which served to ameliorate or even conceal the harsh realities of imperial conquest and war, as well as augmenting the underlying assertive virility of imperialism itself. The public school ethos portrayed in Hughes' novel, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, not only fostered the ideology of muscular Christianity with its emphasis on the vigour of the male body, but it also disseminated tropes deriving from the related discourses of sport and gamesmanship which intersected with the discourse of war via the public-school-educated officer class of the British army. As Robert H. MacDonald indicates, the metaphors of war as sport and sport as war tended to blur categories, so that the phrase 'playing the game', which echoes throughout Sir Henry Newbolt's poem about war, 'Vitaī Lampada', could equally entail the observation of rules of engagement and codes of behaviour both on the rugby or cricket pitches or on the battlefield.<sup>29</sup> The serious intent behind engagement in battle is concealed behind playful euphemisms, such as "taking morning coffee' with the Zulu" and "taking 'tea with the Masai'", whilst the 'sport' of hunting wild game, beloved of the British upper classes, transfers to the arena of war, in terms which are nowadays found unacceptable, with the use of metaphors of sport to depict the hunting down and killing of the enemy.<sup>30</sup> This is exemplified by Robert Baden-Powell, now best remembered for founding the Boy Scout Movement, who was actively involved in the campaign to

<sup>28</sup>J.S.B. Monsell's 'Fight the good fight' and Bishop W.W. How's 'For all the Saints' appeared at around the same time as Sabine Baring-Gould's 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'. (Anderson, 1971, p. 70)

<sup>29</sup>MacDonald, Robert H.: *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994, pp. 20-21.

<sup>30</sup>MacDonald, 1994, p. 23.

suppress the Matabele during the Shona and Ndebele Revolts of 1896-7 which inspired Schreiner to write *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*. He describes scouting "against wild beasts of the human kind", and gives "man-hunting" as the best sport of all.<sup>31</sup>

The discourse of history, so crucial to the imposition of imperial power, also interacts with the rhetoric of warfare. As MacDonald explains, British history is popularly conceptualized as a continuum of salient heroic incidents which function as tropes for British rectitude and supremacy:

History, in the popular sense, has very little to do with fact, but a great deal to do with metaphorical or imaginative reality, and what I will call the 'Island Story' ... was the paramount patriotic myth of the New Imperial age. ... It had its villains, and of course, its heroes, whose characters tended to merge into a single persona, reflecting the heroism of the nation. Its grand theme was patriotic, its controlling metaphor theatrical: History was a stage on which kings and queens, generals and admirals, made their entrances conducted their heroics, and exited winning in each battle more glory for the cause. ... By the late nineteenth century the myth had been appropriated by popular imperialism, and the last chapter of the nation's story was now world dominion.<sup>32</sup>

History, therefore, generates a series of episodes, enacted tableaux-like as in some primary school texts, in which aspects of heroism in warfare are celebrated along with lineage or heredity, rather than being a reflection of the lives of the masses and the struggle for democracy, or insight into the development of political thought.

As a result, not only do genuinely heroic incidents come to perform an important tropological function within the discourses of history, imperialism, and militarism, but reversals of fortune, such as those which could be labelled 'The Last Stand', are also transmogrified and subsumed into an almost seamless rhetoric iterating and reiterating over a period of time, images of British probity, ascendancy, style, and, of course, virility. For example, the Indian 'Mutiny', which I discuss in relation to Steel's work in the following chapter, generated, and even now continues to generate, multiple cameo images of British fortitude under siege which assisted in rendering the horrific fate of *British* subjects acceptable to a British public. Some years later, as MacDonald has shown, General Gordon's death at Khartoum as he attempted to withstand being besieged by the troops of the Mahdi, is also translated into evidence of British fortitude

<sup>31</sup>Baden-Powell, Robert S.S.: *Sport in War* (1900) p. 18, and *Aid to Scouting, for N.C.O.s and Men* (1899) p. 12; cited in MacDonald, 1994, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup>MacDonald, 1994, p. 51.

and bravery, and Gordon's elevation to a revered and almost saint like stature in the British pantheon of heroes re-enacts the beatification of Sir Henry Havelock who relieved Cawnpore and fought his way towards an attempted relief of Lucknow during the 'Mutiny'.

The fact that both these men were deeply involved in missionary work, and had therefore shown themselves to be true 'Christian Soldiers', added to their sanctification. Anderson tells how Havelock "was notorious among his fellow officers for his prayer meetings", and MacDonald relates how Gordon's missionary work amongst the sick and the poor rendered him "a potent symbol of the Victorian Christ".<sup>33</sup> Unpalatable facts which detract from the mystique of heroism are often absent from, or glossed over, in popular accounts of heroes' lives.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the deaths of Havelock and Gordon, although both related to the ignominy of British defeats, are transmuted into 'good' deaths for the sake of 'The Flag'.<sup>35</sup> In the paintings of Lady Elizabeth Butler, for example, iconic representations of British manhood, as in *The Flag* (1898; fig. 4.1), were extremely popular with the British public, and served to bolster British self confidence and moral fibre. 'Last Stand' deaths, like Havelock's and Gordon's, therefore came to stand as the paradigm for all soldiers, and by ultimate extension, those civilians involved in creating the empire, partly because they are considered to have lived in a 'good' cause and their lives are then translated as 'good', partly because if they perish in the attempt they have died defending the good causes of 'the Flag', but chiefly because it appears that the discourse of British history resists evidence of defeat or failure. Therefore, the rhetoric of public school militarism which exhorted soldiers and colonizers alike to 'teach the natives a lesson' simultaneously licensed the worst excesses of imperialist behaviour or the most foolhardy of ventures, because failures or defeats were almost always rationalized as having been undertaken in a good cause, and the British protagonists mythologized.

---

<sup>33</sup>Anderson, 1971, p. 50; Macdonald, 1994, p. 85.

<sup>34</sup>Even Olive Anderson does not mention how Havelock met his death; having fought his way into the besieged Residency at Lucknow, he then found himself under siege until eventual rescue by relief forces under the command of Sir Colin Campbell but died of dysentery a week later. According to MacDonald, Gordon was involved in mercenary campaigns in China. (MacDonald, 1994, p. 85)

<sup>35</sup>The 'good' deaths of men in battle contrast markedly with the 'sinful' deaths of 'Fallen Women' which I discuss in Chapter One.

The individual mythologies built up within the discourse of imperial history also link with the mythologies created as a form of pseudo-history in literature. It is no coincidence that the century which saw the rapid expansion of the British empire also saw the proliferation of adventure stories portraying the world as Britain's oyster, complete with fabulous treasure ready for plucking with little or no effort. Popular novels published from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, such as R.M. Ballantine's *The Coral Island* (1857), Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), and Sir Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1886) and *She* (1887), not only tend to displace indigenous peoples, depicting them either as background figures denied both agency and titular rights to land and resources or as exoticized curiosities, but they also echo the swashbuckling pirate tradition of an earlier mythologized history, that of Drake, Raleigh and Hawkins.

A powerful iconography and mythology with its origins in the frontier life of the American west also pervaded the outposts of empire. Tim Jeal notes in his biography of Robert Baden-Powell "the cowboy influence came out clearly in Matabeleland" as Baden-Powell first adopted a Stetson and a neckerchief in Africa. Indeed, Baden-Powell exemplified the spirit of muscular imperialism by fusing together the pirate and cowboy traditions in his diary with the comment that the streets of African towns were filled with "crowds of the most theatrical-looking swashbucklers and cowboys". He is also said to have subscribed to *Harper's Magazine* because of his admiration for Frederic Remington's sketches of cowboy life which it featured.<sup>36</sup>

In this way muscular imperialism comes to be figured as the very stuff of boyhood adventure stories, yet it is validated because it is seen as the Island Story in the making and, therefore, as service, or even duty, to the empire and its expansion. As a result colonial adventure became a means of escape from the confines of Victorian Britain and offered males, in particular, a proving ground for the self and opportunities to assert manhood by enacting the fantasies of muscular imperialism. In separate studies of Rider Haggard's work both Sandra Gilbert and Anne McClintock make explicit the psycho-sexual links between the penetration and feminization of the conquered land, the subjugation of women and indigenous races, and the 'exoticization' of indigenous

---

<sup>36</sup>Jeal, Tim: *Baden-Powell*, Hutchinson, London, 1989, pp. 188 & 175.



women. Whereas Gilbert argues that nineteenth-century fascination with Haggard's *She* revolves around the interaction of three related phenomena, Egyptology, spiritualism, and the perceived threat to masculinity through the emergence of the 'New Woman' in Britain, McClintock points out that, in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, the map which "white men must cross in order to secure the riches of diamond mines" is, if inverted, "the diagram of a female body ...spread-eagled and truncated - the only parts which are drawn are those that denote female sexuality" (fig. 4.2).<sup>37</sup> This trope linking colonial and sexual penetration to the acquisition of treasure also figures indigenous women both as the treasure-house of erotica and as a means of access to wealth. As I shall show in my discussion of Colenso and Schreiner's work, the labour of black Africans was crucial to the imperial project, and Schreiner, in particular, explores the relationship between the exploitation of black women's labour and imperial power.

#### **The Histories of Frances Colenso: Bushman's River Pass and Isandlwana**

Colenso's counter discourse is set against the background of events leading to the Bushman's River Pass affair of 1873 and Durnford's death at Isandlwana in 1879. In 1848, when the Hlubi tribe led by their hereditary chief, Langalibalele, fled from Zululand where they had once held sway, they made their way into Natal. Here they were settled eventually on a location in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains by the British colonial government in Natal on the advice of Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs and self-styled expert on African politics, and commanded to keep at bay the San people, who frequently attempted to make incursions into Natal, territory which the white colonizers believed to be theirs.<sup>38</sup>

Once the Hlubi were under the jurisdiction of the Natal government a number of points of friction built up. In the first place, the Hlubi found themselves in a cash-based economy and liable to pay rents and taxes. Although they were successful on their own farms, they incurred the double displeasure of white farmers as the Hlubi were unwilling to work for the whites and therefore the farmers were deprived of cheap African labour. In time, the Hlubi were also accused of being competitive and ruining

<sup>37</sup>Gilbert, Sandra M.: 'Rider Haggard's Heart of Darkness', in *Partisan Review*, 50:3 1983, pp. 444-53; McClintock, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup>Colenso refers to the San people as Bushmen.

the market for farmed produce which had arisen as a result of the discovery of diamonds at Griqualand West in 1868 and which the white farmers had hoped to exploit for themselves - with the benefit of African labour. The diamond mines also created a demand for black labour; those of the Hlubi who were willing to work preferred employment there because they could obtain guns, which were sometimes provided in lieu of wages. However, against the background of feared uprisings at a time when Zulus greatly outnumbered the white colonists in Natal, the colonial government had introduced strict rules concerning the possession of firearms by black Africans and required all guns to be registered.<sup>39</sup> This the Hlubi were reluctant to do because there had been instances where guns submitted for registration had been returned to their African owners in a damaged, useless condition.

Amidst mounting white hysteria and growing mistrust, a number of misunderstandings on both sides contributed to worsening relations. As Colenso points out in her *History of the Zulu War*, the colonial government was sending out confusing signals as the Hlubi had not only been given guns in part or full payment for work undertaken, but they had also been charged with defending Natal from the 'Bushman'.<sup>40</sup> Also, Langalibalele was unable to force his followers to comply with the colonizers' demands for control of firearms.<sup>41</sup> However, his failure to attend meetings to which he was summoned was taken as a sign of intransigence, despite the fact that he sent his apologies for non-attendance due to ill-health.<sup>42</sup> His non-appearance may indeed have been occasioned by illness, but he was growing increasingly nervous about British intentions and was reluctant to trust his person to their care. The coincidental but insensitive siting of the annual camp of a corps of colonial military volunteers near Estcourt in June 1873 had appeared to him to pose a direct threat to his people, but even his extreme caution was misconstrued because "(s)uch distrust of British good

---

<sup>39</sup>In 1873, when the Bushman's River Pass incident took place, there were 16,000 white colonists and 300,000 Zulus in Natal. (ed. Wyn Rees: *Colenso Letters from Natal*, Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1958, p. 259)

<sup>40</sup>Colenso, Frances Ellen: *The History of the Zulu War and Its Origin (assisted in those portions of the work which touch upon military matters by Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Durnford)*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1880, pp. 21-22; hereafter given as Colenso, *H.Z.W.*; Lieut.-Col. Edward Durnford was Anthony Durnford's brother.

<sup>41</sup>Rees, 1958, p. 260.

<sup>42</sup>Colenso, *H.Z.W.*, p. 23.

faith was held in itself to be a crime, the insolence of which could not be overlooked".<sup>43</sup>

When, in November 1873, Langalibalele was outlawed following his failure to respond to an ultimatum issued by the colonial government, and a considerable military force led by Shepstone and the recently appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the colony, Sir Benjamin Pine, with Major Anthony Durnford commanding one section, set out against him, his reaction was to flee.<sup>44</sup> Langalibalele's flight is interpreted by Colenso as further proof of his innocence and of his lack of ill-intention towards the colonial government or the British colonizers. Wyn Rees notes that the fact that thousands of Hlubi were following Langalibalele and making their way out of Natal posed a threat to Shepstone's reputation as an expert in African matters and risked scrutiny from the very highest levels into his administration of native affairs.<sup>45</sup>

It is, therefore, apparent that the discourses of history and imperialism collude in order to manipulate the Hlubi for imperial advantage. Firstly, the Hlubi's own history, which embodied their understanding of land entitlement, was appropriated by the colonial authority that claimed African land as its own and set out the boundaries of the location for the Hlubi. In the second place, the Hlubi were permitted to occupy their location only on sufferance. There was the explicit understanding that they would keep the San at bay, but perhaps more importantly, there was within imperialist discourse the implicit understanding, within the collective colonial mind if not in the minds of the Hlubi, that Africans who accepted white patronage not only accepted a paternalism which dictated what was 'meet and right' for their welfare, including the imposition of Christianity, colonial standards, and rent and taxes, but they also provided ready labour for the advancement of the colonizers' commercial interests and of imperial territorial

---

<sup>43</sup>Daymond, M.J.: Introduction to Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 25. Defending Langalibalele and his people, Colenso argues, "there was nothing in the behaviour of the Hlubi tribe to give the colonists cause for apprehension. No lawless acts were committed, no cattle stolen, no farmhouse fired, and the vague fears which existed amongst the white inhabitants as to what might happen were rather the result of the way in which the 'Government' shook its head over the matter as a serious one, than justified by any real cause for alarm". Colenso, *H.Z.W.*, pp. 22 - 23.

<sup>44</sup>Daymond lists "British troops, volunteers from the Natal Carbineers and several thousand African troops". (Introduction to Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 25) Colenso states that the force was made up of "partly ...regulars, partly colonial, a few Basuto horse, with an entirely unorganised and useless addition of untrained Natal natives". (Colenso, *H.Z.W.*, p. 24.)

<sup>45</sup>Colenso, *H.Z.W.*, p. 24, and Rees, 1958, p. 260.

gain. Thus the refusal of the Hlubi to comply with the commercial ambitions of white farmers, together with their desire to acquire firearms, accorded with tropes of black laziness and black savagery.

Paradoxically, the more that Langalibalele and his people tried to withdraw peaceably from the situation, the more preoccupied became the discourse of imperialism with asserting self-righteous white supremacy, and with proclaiming the untrustworthiness of the Hlubi. Finally, the colonial government's unsuccessful attempts to enforce the registration of guns elicited avowals of punishment from affronted authority, of 'teaching the native a lesson', which resulted in the fruitless summoning of Langalibalele and the mounting of the military expedition in his pursuit. The expedition itself can be construed as a further utterance in the rhetoric of imperial history for armed confrontation was the almost inevitable outcome of this tactic. However, any retaliation by the Hlubi could be conveniently absorbed into imperial discourse as confirmation of their dangerousness, thereby bolstering colonial hegemony exponentially, because such incidents could be used to justify further heavy-handed approaches in relationships with African peoples to the metropolitan government, and because blame attached to the Hlubi effectively concealed shortcomings in the local administration of African affairs.

When it was clear that Langalibalele was effecting a breakout from the fastnesses of the Drakensberg Mountains, Durnford was charged with cutting off the most likely route of escape at Bushman's River Pass, but, because the ultimatum had not yet expired, was ordered by Pine not to fire first. The expedition proved disastrous in many ways. In mountainous terrain, in extremely poor weather, and with woefully inaccurate maps, the military section ordered to meet up with Durnford's group in a pincer movement became totally lost and Durnford himself eventually reached Bushman's River Pass only with difficulty, some twenty-four hours after the designated time; injured, as a result of a fall from horseback, he found himself face to face with the Hlubi but without adequate support. Durnford attempted to negotiate with Langalibalele's agitated men via an interpreter, and accounts of subsequent events diverge; however, the outcome was that indelible accusations of mismanagement and cowardice were levelled against Durnford.

There are some similarities in accounts of the confrontation, but the concerns of officialdom to maintain control over rhetoric are apparent. Pine's own official account addressed to Lord Kimberley states:

6. Taking advantage of this delay, [*whilst Durnford negotiated*] however, the young men and warriors of the Tribe crowded round our small party, offered them every species of insult by words, and menaced with their muskets and assegais, and finally, a part of them threw themselves behind rocks and other cover which commanded the situation. Thus hemmed in, the Volunteer Force, only 37 of whom had reached the spot, intimidated by the shameful and mutinous conduct of their drill-instructor, Sergt. Clarke, an old soldier, who cried out that they were betrayed etc. were seized with a panic and took to flight. The moment their backs were turned the Kafirs fired and killed three of their number including, I regret to say, a son of Major Erskine (Secretary to the Natal Government), and also the interpreter and one of the Basuto Guides. The rest of the body effected their escape...
9. The Pass then left unguarded enabled the bulk of the Tribe, and perhaps the Chief, to escape out of the Colony ...
11. This has been our first and last reverse, if having our men foully and treacherously murdered can be called at least in a military point of view a reverse at all. In all other respects we have been everywhere successful. The great bulk of the Tribe, after boasting that they would meet us in fight have fled out of the Colony. Our forces have, in small skirmishes with the remainder of the tribe hidden in caves and strong fastnesses, been everywhere successful, killing a large number and taking prisoners some men and an immense number of their women. No men however have been killed unless with arms in their hands, but I regret that their number has been so considerable.<sup>46</sup>

Pine invokes the tropes of public school fair play in asserting that, because the Hlubi were menacing and seizing control of the situation whilst Durnford was otherwise occupied in negotiations, they therefore failed to 'play the game'; indeed, their attack on the retreating British is cited as conclusive proof of their lack of honour. Moreover, in describing the subsequent rounding up of the Hlubi and the reprisals taken against them, Pine's language is carefully selected to emphasize Hlubi treachery in order to justify those reprisals, and to translate a reversal of fortune into a sign of success. However, as Rees points out, "Pine was careful not to reveal that only the old men of the tribe had been left behind by Langalibalele", and that the men killed, described by Pine as a "considerable" number, were unlikely to pose any real threat to the British.<sup>47</sup>

A letter from Colenso's mother not only suggests that Durnford was a convenient scapegoat, but also introduces the fact, received first hand from Durnford himself but

---

<sup>46</sup>P.R.O. Colonial Office Series 179/112, despatch no. 105, dated 13 November 1873, addressed to Secretary of State Lord Kimberley; cited in Rees, 1958, pp. 261-2.

<sup>47</sup>Rees, 1958, p. 262.

suppressed from the official version of events as it would have portrayed the Hlubi in a better light, that Hlubi elders tried to prevent the attack at the Pass:

...Langalibalele only ran away, the shooting was only to cover his retreat, rather it seemed the self-willed act of a few of the young men. Major Durnford bears testimony to the efforts made by the elders of that party at the Pass to stop the violence of the younger ones. He saw one of the Indunas knock a young man over the head with a knobkerrie and fell him to the ground.

We have been greatly taken up with this affair. Military etiquette seems to forbid our friend Major Durnford from justifying himself in the papers, and it is impossible to clear him from the charge of mismanagement without exposing the misconduct of the volunteers under Captain Barter, a body of men to whom danger of that kind was a novelty, and might have been easily excused for yielding to a sudden feeling of panic, particularly when one of their members, an old soldier too, a certain Serjeant Clarke, called out to them to ride for their lives, but it is unpardonable of them to try and conceal their own failure by throwing the blame upon Major Durnford.<sup>48</sup>

From this it appears that Clarke's cry of alarm points to the crux of the matter, namely that the protection of the honour of the *civilians* involved was paramount. By mentioning Clarke and by failing to clear Durnford's name, despite being aware that the latter was bound by military etiquette, Pine utilizes the rhetoric of imperialist history and the tropological figure of the ideal soldier as a device to indicate shortcomings amongst the military. This not only protects his own reputation and that of Shepstone as instigators and leaders of the ill-judged, poorly planned, and inadequately provisioned expedition, but it also conceals the fact that, had the Hlubi been treated reasonably all along by the colonial administration and the white civilian farmers, it would never have taken place at all.<sup>49</sup> It is significant, too, that Colenso herself omits any mention of Sergeant Clarke's call of alarm and the volunteers' hasty retreat from her account of the incident in *History of the Zulu War*. Set alongside Durnford's inability to defend his own reputation, and the fact that he asked Colenso not to publish *My Chief and I* during his lifetime, it is therefore possible to read this omission as Durnford's refusal to let a non-commissioned officer take the blame, and also as Colenso's determination to restore his reputation by observing his request, thereby insisting on his conformity to the model of the honourable soldier.

---

<sup>48</sup>Sarah Frances Colenso to Mrs Lyell, dated 4 January, 1871 (Rees, 1958, p. 271); Frances Ellen Colenso's mother, Sarah Frances Colenso, often signs her letters, 'Frances Sarah'; to confuse matters further, Frances Ellen Colenso also had a brother, Francis, known as Frank.

<sup>49</sup>This is confirmed by Donald R. Morris: "If Langalibalele got out of Natal with 10,000 amaHlubi, his act of defiance might well destroy Shepstone's precarious reserve system over the other hereditary chieftains and bring the entire reserve system crashing down in ruin, and the clan's arrival in the Cape Colony would in any event lead to a most unwelcome probe". (Morris, Donald R.: *The Washing of the Spears: The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1966, p. 217)

Although *My Chief and I* poses a political challenge to the colonial government by engaging with the tropological strategies of imperialist rhetoric and exposing the way in which control of historico-political discourse augments imperial power, it may also be read as an adventure yarn without background knowledge of the events which precede the action. By employing as first person narrator and ostensible author of the book the fictional 'Atherton Wylde', a reprobate exile from Britain whose recent arrival in Natal is explained by his need to experience the transformative nature of hard work in the colonies, Colenso permits the explanation and exploration of contentious factual evidence through an apparently neutral consciousness whilst also concealing and protecting her relationship with Durnford. This narrative device, together with her careful structuring of the plot, redeem the book from becoming pure polemic.

The themes of *My Chief and I* derive from Colenso's preoccupation with restoring Durnford's reputation in the public eye. Wylde takes up the story in the immediate aftermath of the Langalibalele outbreak and the Bushman's River Pass affair when Durnford, in his role of Colonial Engineer, was ordered to block all mountain passes in the Drakensberg Mountains in order to inspire "confidence to the up-country districts, the inhabitants of which were in perpetual fear of inroads from the scattered members of the outlawed tribe".<sup>50</sup> However, concerned by the punitive but unwarranted dispersal of the Putini people by the colonial government for their alleged involvement in the Langalibalele outbreak, Durnford embarked upon a self-ordained mission to win the restitution of property which had been seized from them, and their freedom, by employing ninety of the Putini men as a labour force to carry out this work in the mountains from May to September 1874.<sup>51</sup> This, he believed, would prove to the colonial and imperial governments that the African peoples were inherently trustworthy, loyal, and industrious; in his view, these qualities would only become manifest in response to humane and consistent policies towards the people themselves. Colenso therefore had three aims in countering the distorting mirror of historico-imperialist discourse: her prime aim, the rehabilitation of Durnford's

---

<sup>50</sup>Colenso, *H.Z.W.*, p. 64.

<sup>51</sup>Official documents cited in Colenso's *History of the Zulu War* refer to this group as "the Putili tribe," but Colenso notes that they are "properly called the Amangwe tribe, 'Putini' being, in reality, the name of their late chief". (*H.Z.W.*, pp. 70 & 63) In her Introduction to *My Chief and I*, M.J. Daymond refers to them as the Ngwe people. However, as Colenso uses the word 'Putini' throughout *My Chief and I* I use the same term in order to avoid confusion.

reputation, was dependent on a secondary goal, that of successfully discrediting the colonial government; in turn, these were predicated upon Durnford's successful reinstatement of the Putini and Hlubi peoples to their former standing, by establishing their innocence of malfeasance, and by highlighting the failure of imperial and colonial policies in relation to indigenous peoples.

Consequently, *My Chief and I* is structured to interrogate imperial discourse, to disprove the allegations against Durnford, and to prove that, rather being than a selfish exploiter of a rhetoric of imperialism redolent of muscularity but devoid of genuine Christianity, he is indeed a true Christian soldier. Colenso's evidence of this is framed through an assortment of eyewitness accounts along with notes and references taken from newspapers. Significantly, because this evidence is revealed at significant geographical points along the way throughout the journey of ascent into the mountains to block the passes, as Durnford, Wylde, and the Putini men retrace the footsteps of the earlier expedition, history itself is revisited and reconstructed. By revealing the details piecemeal and out of chronological order, however, Colenso's structure provides a tension which relieves the book from didacticism.

Durnford is situated as imperial hero at the outset by the prefatory poem, 'Durnford', written by T.W. Swift, and gleaned by Colenso from *The Cape Argus* where it first appeared in April 1879 following Durnford's death at Isandwvana.<sup>52</sup> All the tropes and signifiers of a discourse that equates imperialism with heroism are present. Militarism and Christianity are spliced together to sanctify warfare; the fallen are beatified as "that bright band", and "the shining line"; references to "the colours", to "the glorious queen's ...standard 'midst her foes", and to "Sword, flag, commission", testify both to the patriotic ideals and mythology of the Island Story, and to a phallic pride in individual heroism associated with the rhetoric of muscular Christianity and the Last Stand. Durnford's loss at Isandwvana is, therefore, redeemed by his conformity to the model of the ideal Christian Soldier: he bears his responsibilities with "Christian chivalry", is self-sacrificing and "obedient unto death" even when overwhelmed, and, in laying down his life "for man!", achieves the ultimate goal - a good death.

---

<sup>52</sup>Colenso has annotated the poem "(From the Cape Argus, April 5th, 1879)".



The tropological figure of the Christian soldier recurs throughout *My Chief and I* to reverse the widely disseminated image of Durnford as a coward and reposition him as a hero. Consequently, Colenso's rhetoric and tropology simultaneously mirror and seek to challenge and correct historico-imperial discourse. The elegiac tone of Swift's poem is repeated in the six page 'Note', which appears somewhat incongruously between chapters eight and nine. This incorporates a lengthy newspaper report about the battle of Isandlwana and the sentiment is re-echoed in *Five Years Later*, the previously unpublished sequel to *My Chief and I* which is included in the 1994 edition.<sup>53</sup> The positioning of the 'Note' is significant. At the end of the preceding chapter, 'Our Journey On', Wylde's narrative is replaced by that of Jabez, a Basuto warrior and one of the eye witnesses to the earlier expedition, who testifies to the volunteers' cowardice and Durnford's heroism: "He was going back to die, because his soldier's spirit could not endure that he should ever turn his back upon a foe".<sup>54</sup> In this way Colenso signals that Durnford's willingness to sacrifice himself for the honour of queen and country at Bushman's River Pass is emblematic of the Last Stand and should, therefore, earn him figuration as heroic ideal Christian soldier, rather than branding him a craven coward.

The 'Note' which follows is also redolent of the rhetoric of the Last Stand. It gives a detailed description of the site at Isandlwana some months after the battle and draws particular attention to the positions in which the officers' bodies were found, in order to argue that an examination of the lie of the ground reveals Durnford's exemplary bravery in action. His body was found lying at a 'neck', the "place of danger and ...therefore the place for the commanding officer".<sup>55</sup> In the face of an overwhelming foe he was surrounded by "the few men who were willing to stand by him, prepared as it would seem with the assistance of the two guns, to make a bold stand in an advantageous position, and thus cover the retreat of the bulk of the force".<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the 'Note's' comparison of Durnford's stand at Isandlwana to the stand made by Leonidas at Thermopylae effectively projects Durnford as a hero of epic stature by linking to an earlier, almost mythical, historical discourse of ancient Greek heroism,

---

<sup>53</sup>Colenso has taken the bulk of the contents of the 'Note' from *The Natal Witness*, 29 May, 1879.

<sup>54</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 53.

<sup>55</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 57.

<sup>56</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 58.

recognizable to the classically educated officer class, whilst also invoking the high rhetoric of the Last Stand:

“But was not the holding of the pass by the Camp, in which every man shared the fate of the brave LEONIDAS and his companions, much more like that memorable action? ...and after four months of doubt, contradiction, and despatch-writing is it made known to the world who they were who have most deserved the coveted decoration ‘for valour’. COGHILL and MELVILLE, - yes; CHARD and BROMHEAD, - yes; but more than all DURNFORD and SCOTT.”<sup>57</sup>

The ‘Note’ therefore argues for recognition of Durnford and Scott’s valour, and their absorption as figures into historico-imperialist discourse, alongside Leonidas, Coghill, Melville, Chard, and Bromhead. Just as the latter four British soldiers have been recognized “‘for valour’” at Isandlwana and Rorke’s Drift by the award of the Victoria Cross, or equivalent commendation, so, it contends, should Durnford and Scott also have been honoured for their bravery.<sup>58</sup> Indeed the ‘Note’s’ conclusion that “‘there is a sermon in the coupling together of these two names ...the inculcation of those two noblest, and perhaps rarest virtues under the sun, the high honour of the gentleman and the broad charity of the Christian’”, not only re-enacts its own class-conscious muscular Christianity, but, in raising Scott and Durnford to almost saint-like status by including a proposal that their memories should be honoured by the erection of a “‘memorial church’” on the spot where they fell, it also makes explicit the links between imperialism and Christian soldiery. Colenso’s insertion of the ‘Note’ directly after Jabez’s witness statement therefore supplies high level corroboration of Durnford’s valour, whilst also providing Colenso with the opportunity to explore further exactly what the trope of the Christian soldier should represent.

This becomes evident in the comparisons she draws between Durnford and the colonial leaders. In the title and throughout the book Wylde refers to Durnford as “my Chief”,

<sup>57</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 58; Leonidas, King of Sparta, defended the Pass of Thermopylae against the Persians, in 480 B.C, in the face of overwhelming odds, only one of the three hundred Spartans survived.

<sup>58</sup>The histories of Chard, Bromhead, Coghill and Melville(e) are charged with the signifiers of heroic muscular Christianity in defence of Empire, Flag, Queen, and Country. Both Lieutenant John Rouse Merriott Chard, (1847-97) and Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead (circa 1846-1891) defended the mission station at Rorke’s Drift and were later awarded the Victoria Cross. Their stand against 3,000 Zulu warriors with a force of only 80 men earned them mythological status, reiterated even now in the popular film *Zulu* (1963). Lieutenants Nevill Coghill and Teignmouth Melville(e) fought at Isandlwana and escaped across the Buffalo River, only to die on the far side. Later, a cross, potent symbol of Christian soldiery and self-sacrifice, was raised in memory of Coghill. (Morris, 1966, p. 590). Melville(e) had been trying to save the Queen’s Colour, another key signifier of heroic endeavour. The Victoria Cross, instituted in 1856, bears the inscription “For Valour”.

so that the phrase comes to accrue special significance in the course of the text in relation to his public role as a military man, to his personal attributes, and to the discourse of imperialism. Durnford is positioned throughout as an outstanding soldier and leader deserving of both the status and epithet of chief, with Wylde enumerating his personal qualities from the first page and averring, "(t)here was not one amongst us - officer or man - who would not have followed him to certain death, or have gladly died in his defence".<sup>59</sup> He is also depicted as widely revered by Africans, including the Putini people who accord him the honorifics usually reserved for their own leaders. Although Durnford's modesty leads him to decline the distinction '*Bayete*', normally accorded to royalty alone, they continue to salute him in this way:

To this address they replied, in spite of the Colonel's repeated admonitions, by one simultaneous shout of "*Bayete!*" and then the party moved off with cries and exclamations in honour of my Chief, all denoting their great respect, but the translations of which sound odd to English ears. "*Inkos! Baba!* [Lord and Father!] oh! great wild beast! oh! great black one! Oh! lion! oh! tiger! oh! great snake! oh! chief, your face is white, but your heart is very black!" (an especial compliment) - all, except the reference to the 'white face' being terms commonly applied to the Zulu king by his warriors.<sup>60</sup>

By showing that the Putini people equate blackness with goodness and the savagery of wild beasts with nobility, and by portraying Durnford as worthy of their acclaim, Colenso therefore challenges the very basis of the nineteenth-century imperial/Christian discourse in which blackness is synonymous with sinfulness, and wildness or savagery denotes a state of being uncivilized, whilst at the same time effectively undermining both the imperial and colonial administrations which utilize the tropes of darkness, and of the noble savage and the wild man to their own ends.

Colenso also plays on the epithet, "my Chief", to subvert the position of the Natal administration, which she sarcastically dismisses as "those precious colonial authorities".<sup>61</sup> In particular, 'The Minister for Native Affairs', Shepstone, is the subject of a scathing attack upon his ineffectual attempts to fulfil his role and upon his failure to maintain a high personal moral standard. Durnford's efforts to help the Putini are juxtaposed against the Minister's claims throughout to be the 'chief' expert on 'native affairs'. The latter's effectiveness in his post receives cool scrutiny through Wylde's consciousness as a newly-arrived outsider and as "an Englishman ...not so well-versed

---

<sup>59</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 115, also pp. 72, 113, & 121.

<sup>61</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 36.

in kafir customs as the Head of the Native Department".<sup>62</sup> The controlling voice of the narrator moves from an initially neutral stance and a determination to appraise whether the Minister is "the wisest and best man of his age, the saviour of the colony, commanding the most absolute respect and affection from the whole native population", to mounting incredulity and satire as Wylde realizes that the Minister might indeed be "a crafty scheming man, bent on increasing his own power, and whose policy for years had been dishonest, unprincipled, and rotten to the core".<sup>63</sup> The narrator's observations on the Minister's conduct of negotiations with the Putini people, openly disparage Shepstone's much-vaunted diplomatic skills which appear to consist solely of imitating what he believes to be 'native' customs:

His manners were those of a paramount chief, his habits of thought evidently running in the same groove; and I confess the scene appeared to me to be a farce, and nothing more.<sup>64</sup>

Colenso's satire of the Minister gathers pace with repetitive phrases ridiculing his verbose and circumlocutory attempts to communicate with the Putini people, and show Wylde's initial interest turning to boredom, "...a few words fell from the lips of the great white Chief", and "...more words of wisdom flowed from the lips of the great Chief, when the same ceremony was repeated, and so on, again and again".<sup>65</sup> Wylde's conclusion, "I could hardly believe that I saw before me the man who has for so many years controlled, in England's name, the destinies of the native races of Natal", leaves no doubt that as the Minister is clearly not "the wisest and best man of his age" he must therefore be "rotten to the core".<sup>66</sup> As a result, not only is the Minister's rhetoric undermined, but the gubernatorial infrastructure supporting his appointment is also shown to be suspect.

Like so many of the writers whose works are examined in this thesis, Colenso displays a masterly control of wit and irony. By using the term "the great white Chief" to parody first Shepstone, and later Pine, who as Lieutenant-Governor claimed the title of "Supreme Chief of the Zulus in Natal", she effectively reverses and deflates an imperialist rhetoric which postulates the ascendancy and cultural superiority of the

---

<sup>62</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 27.

<sup>64</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 28.

<sup>65</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 28.

<sup>66</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 29.

colonizers and tends to moralise about indigenous peoples from an anthropological point of view.<sup>67</sup> As a result, the British themselves are situated as a curious and inconsistent tribe governed by strange chiefs. In contrast, Durnford, whose acclamation as honorary chief of the Putini has already shown him to be more statesmanlike than the Minister, emerges with enhanced credibility. Durnford and Wylde's visit to the homes of some of the Putini people affords further amusement at Shepstone's expense when they discover that the mother of a newly born Putini boy has rejected the name which Shepstone has munificently bestowed on him, that of 'Benjamin Shepstone' after "the two great chiefs of the colony, one the ruler of the whites, and the other of the blacks", as Shepstone styles Pine and himself. Instead she has named the child 'Major' after Durnford, as he was the "one great chief she had seen, ...a leader of soldiers, whose look made bad men and cowards afraid, but warriors and women rejoice".<sup>68</sup> The rejection of Shepstone's proffered patronymic is thus a rejection of him and Pine as tribal patriarchs, and of the condescending paternalism they represent, as well as further corroboration that governance along the lines suggested by Durnford is preferred by indigenous peoples.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, it is through Colenso's characterization of Durnford and his humane and respectful approach to the Putini people that Colenso makes her most telling points about the potential behind his brand of Christian soldiery and the failure of aggressive muscular imperialism masquerading under the name of Christianity. Durnford's loyalty, as a good soldier, and his sense of duty to the British government is stressed, and he exhorts the Putini to be "very good and obedient to 'Government'", in order that they might regain their freedom and land.<sup>70</sup> However, the narratorial voice draws close to Durnford's own point of view to underscore his abhorrence of the easy imperialist rhetoric deployed by the colonial government and colonial farmers to rationalise the seizure of Putini land and the subjugation of the Putini people to enforced servitude,

---

<sup>67</sup>Rees, 1958, p. 263; Morris gives Pine's title as "Supreme Native Chieftain". (Morris, 1966, p. 217)

<sup>68</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 106

<sup>69</sup>According to Daymond, in her introduction to *My Chief and I*, the name given to Shepstone by the Zulus was "'Somtsewu' (which) ...translates as 'Father of Whiteness'"; this contrasts markedly to the honour the Putini accorded Durnford by praising his black heart. According to Rees, the name accorded to Shepstone is "*Somseu* - the mighty hunter" (Rees, 1958, p. 258, n. 2); either way the translations do not reflect credit upon Shepstone's management of African affairs.

<sup>70</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 72.

verging on slavery, as a punishment for the alleged crime of aiding and abetting the Hlubi's breakout:

Ah! seeing how well the Putini spoils would have 'paid expenses,' and the Putini prisoners supplied 'cheap labour,' if only a convenient veil could be drawn over the little transaction to the eyes at home in England, I no longer wonder at the unpopularity of my Chief, who did so much towards tearing off that veil, and who, behind the scenes as he necessarily was, would not consent to the plan of 'every man making his own little game.' To him duty alone was clear, and he could not comprehend this 'working around crooked places,' as I have heard him term it.<sup>71</sup>

The reporting of commonly-used colonialist phrases in quotation marks, and the repetition of "little", which has the converse effect of magnifying the crimes against the African peoples, not only contribute to the underlying ironic tone of *My Chief and I*, but also foreground narratorial disapproval of colonial practices. It is also interesting to speculate whether Colenso's use of gendered language, in her metaphor of the veil, is a subconscious indicator of the gender of the writer, and of a psycho-sexual longing for her protagonist.

Unlike the colonials' exploitation of the local indigenous people, Durnford's deployment of the Putini to block up the mountain passes is shown to be carried out only with the tribe's best interests at heart and for the sole purpose of earning their freedom and reinstatement. His solicitude for their needs is detailed fully and is typified by his distribution of proper provisions for the expedition, including the replacement of worn greatcoats with new ones, and his establishment of a soup kitchen. Wylde's report that the medical post run by Durnford himself for the Putini labourers in order to combat the rigours of altitude and hard work earns Durnford the title "*innyanga* [medicine man]" from "simple people (who) have an especial reverence for medical skill, which they seem to regard as something with a touch of supernatural in it", has echoes of Christ's healing ministrations to the sick and poor, and replicates the charitable work of the iconic Henry Havelock.<sup>72</sup> As a result, this further endorses Durnford's authenticity as a true Christian soldier.

Colenso also focuses on rumour-mongering and incitement to hysteria as a rhetorical device deployed by the colonial authorities to foment distrust, as a means of exerting control over the local tribes, and over certain sections of the white community in the

<sup>71</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 36.

<sup>72</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 94.

colony. The colonial mindset is revealed first through the behaviour of the Magistrate of Weenen County whose speeches "showed the condition of unreasoning terror to which men's minds had been reduced", and who warns Durnford against bringing the Putini into his county with the words, "Not one of them will be with you in a week, and we shall all be murdered in our beds".<sup>73</sup> As Colenso shows, mistrust breeds mistrust and, wielded to exclude the indigenous peoples at all costs, this often defies logic. With their representative of the colonial government, the Magistrate, disseminating such warnings, fear multiplies amongst the local white community so that they became "mad with foolish terror" of having the Putini present in their county, despite the fact that, ironically, the expedition's mission is to provide greater protection by blocking up the mountain passes and thereby allay fears of incursions.<sup>74</sup> However, the narratorial observation that the planned evacuation of the women of the Magistrate's family will set off "a universal needless panic" also reveals Colenso's understanding of the mechanics of colonialist rhetoric: the propagation of rumours about the supposed threat posed by black men to white women is a rhetorical gambit employed in various parts of the empire to control indigenous men, and foreshadows Flora Annie Steel's exploration of the same topic.<sup>75</sup>

The journey into the mountains which permits Colenso to recover the old ground of the 1873 debacle to restore Durnford's reputation also permits her to explore further the troubled relationship between the black indigenous and white settler populations and the dynamics of colonial power. Although Wylde introduces the Putini people's own metaphor of consumption, "eaten up", a term with scatological connotations describing their ingestion, absorption, and elimination by colonialism which reveals the Putini's sense of complete degradation, this imagery remains undeveloped.<sup>76</sup> Instead, as additional evidence of the colonial authorities' manipulation of power and empty Christian imperialist rhetoric, Colenso supplies, through Wylde, a catalogue of revelations about the atrocities perpetrated on the remnants of Hlubi tribe in the aftermath of the Bushman's River Pass affair, in the form of a secondary narrative

---

<sup>73</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 32.

<sup>74</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 34.

<sup>75</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 35.

<sup>76</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 24; Colenso also uses this phrase in her *History of the Zulu War*, p. 63.

running parallel to the more recent history of the Putini, in order to strengthen her case for a more genuinely Christian approach to imperialism.

Her exposure of the colonial government's insidious policy of 'divide and rule', of setting indigenous peoples against one another, reveals gruesome details about the "late reign of terror".<sup>77</sup> It also discloses the hypocrisy of a historico-imperialist discourse which glorifies and honours warfare conducted by English soldiery on the one hand, yet on the other hand denigrates and condemns the Africans' attempts to defend themselves. On "trusting to the white man's mercy" and surrendering, one Hlubi fugitive was, "instead of being honoured as a gallant warrior, ...then and there shot" by his captors, whilst others were "smoked to death by a party of loyal natives under the command of a white man".<sup>78</sup> Although those "loyal natives" are lambasted by Wylde as "Government devils", 'his' refusal to hold them fully responsible for their actions because "they did but follow the example and carry out the orders of their white masters, who, not being ignorant savages, were therefore far more guilty than they", despite its metropolitan condescension, leaves no doubt where the narrator believes blame should be placed.<sup>79</sup> Durnford's own description of his discovery of a girl who "had been hanged or had been driven to hang herself" leads Wylde to speculate, "Did she fear the return of the native attacking force, who in their permitted violence, spared neither sex, nor age, nor youth?", and to conclude in condemnation of British policy:

Enough of such horrors; one's blood run cold at the repetition of them, but burns with shame and indignation at the thought that they were inflicted in the name of an English Government upon an innocent and helpless people.<sup>80</sup>

It is perhaps no coincidence that Colenso ends her book by placing the above passage at the opening of her 'Conclusion', because the preceding chapter reveals that Durnford's attempts to release the Putini people from bondage are met with further colonial duplicity and rhetorical distortions. Despite the successful completion of the expedition to establish the trustworthy, loyal, and hardworking nature of the Putini by disproving the trope of African laziness, the colonial government compounds its offences by renegeing on its promise to free the whole tribe, and by permitting only the ninety men

---

<sup>77</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 78.

<sup>78</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, pp. 47 & 88.

<sup>79</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, pp. 42 & 89.

<sup>80</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 125.



who accompanied Durnford to be released. The narrator's laconic statement that during the time which elapses whilst Durnford attempts to force the authorities to honour its word "many of the people were 'given out' afresh as servants to the white families up-country", serves to confirm the cynical exploitation of black labour by many of the white colonizers, and echoes Wylde's earlier pronouncement, "it was the old story; the black man did not care to be the white man's slave, and the white man could not endure the black man in any other position".<sup>81</sup> Thus Colenso's main themes are drawn together and firmly recapitulated at the close of the book to remind of Durnford's crusade to save the Putini, of the contrast between his high moral values and the dubious morality of the colonial government, and of the exploitation of indigenous peoples, their displacement and the utilization of their land for whites. At the same time a pointed reference to the English government in the 'Conclusion' functions as a reminder that ultimate responsibility for affairs in Natal lies with those at the metropolitan centre.

Although the book remains little-known outside South African literary circles, *My Chief and I* remains significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, Frances Colenso was one of the few writers of fiction, male or female, to challenge the ethics and ideology of imperialism during this period. Douglas A. Lorimer remarks:

Much of the Victorian discussion of race relations engaged writers with either a background in colonial administration or with some connection with philanthropic lobbies such as the APS. The themes of this non-fiction prose, ...do not appear to have engaged the sympathies of prominent writers of fiction, at least in so far as that genre is represented by Brantlinger (1988).<sup>82</sup>

Lorimer is referring to Patrick Brantlinger's assertion in his book, *Rule of Darkness*, that the fact that "almost no other work of British fiction written before World War I is critical of imperialism ...is a measure of Conrad's achievement" in *Heart of Darkness* (1902).<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, in terms of Colenso's own social context, few in the colony of Natal were concerned with indigenous rights.<sup>84</sup> This is indicated early in *My Chief and*

<sup>81</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, pp. 123 & 46.

<sup>82</sup>Lorimer, Douglas A.: 'Race, science and culture: historical continuities and discontinuities, 1850-1914', in (ed.) Shearer West: *The Victorians and Race*, Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1996, p. 33.

<sup>83</sup>Brantlinger, Patrick: *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988, p. 274.

<sup>84</sup>A number of London-based societies were concerned by affairs in Natal: "...atrocities stories published in the Natal press attracted the attention of the Anti-Slavery Society, the Peace Society and the Aborigines (sic) Protection Society in London; questions were asked in the House and the Secretary of State was Continued on next page...

I, when a man in the Natal omnibus, the nineteenth-century southern African equivalent of the ordinary man in the street, or 'the man on the Clapham omnibus', makes a disparaging remark about "the Exeter Hall cry of pseudo-philanthropists".<sup>85</sup> His reference to the supporters of the Aborigines' Protection Society, based in London's Exeter Hall, represents the low regard in the colony for those involved in humane efforts to help black Africans. *My Chief and I* was, therefore, a courageous and groundbreaking work because it held the potential to expose Colenso and her family to increased public ostracism, and might also have revealed her relationship with Durnford.

It is also an important book when considered in the context of women's writing, because her attack on the exploitation of black Africans focuses attention on the issue of land rights and predates Olive Schreiner's *Peter Trooper Halket of Mashonaland* by some seventeen years. Indeed, *My Chief and I*, and her subsequent histories, *The History of the Zulu War* and the *Ruin of Zululand*, mark her out not only as a historian of note concerned with accuracy and logical analysis, but also as a protofeminist determined to take on the patriarchal establishments of Britain and Natal by refuting the version of imperial history propagated by officialdom. In her lifetime, her work as a female historian of the empire is matched only by the cool incisiveness of Lady Florence Dixie's defence of the Zulu king, Cetewayo, in her pamphlet *A Defence for Zululand and Its King: Echoes from the Blue Book* (1881), which relentlessly, and step by logical step, challenges the British and Natalian governments' dealings with the

---

<sup>84</sup>Continued from previous page...

approached by the President of the Aborigines Protection Society (APS) with a view to the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the Langalibalele affair". The efficacy of the APS is debatable: "It would be an injustice to an association, called into existence and maintained by a true spirit of Christian charity, to pass over in silence the active if seemingly ineffectual, efforts of the Aborigines Protection Society to obtain justice for the unfortunate people of the Putini tribe" (Colenso, *H.Z.W.*, p. 77). Rees states: "no voice was publicly raised in Natal" against the travesty of trial conducted to bring Langalibalele to justice except that of Bishop Colenso, who was eventually granted leave to prepare Langalibalele's defence, but his appeal was rejected. In 1874, Bishop Colenso returned to England to voice his concerns to Lord Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the colonies; following an enquiry, the amaHlubi and the Putini were found to have been treated unjustly and the restitution of their lands was ordered, with a proviso that resulted in weakening the adjudication, "as far as reparation can be made without lowering the influence and endangering the authority of the local government". (Rees, pp. 262-3, p. 402, & pp. 267-269).

<sup>85</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 15. Exeter Hall opened as a public meeting hall in 1831; it was used primarily as a meeting place for philanthropic organizations, whose influence on colonial policy in the 1830s is said to have been considerable.

Zulus in years leading up to the outbreak of the Zulu War and the events at Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift.<sup>86</sup>

The narrative tone in *My Chief and I* differs from that in Colenso's Zulu histories written under her own name. The author's voice in the histories is assertive, self-assured, and occasionally cutting to the point of sarcasm in its observations, with, for example, colonial administrator Sir Garnet Wolseley's style of diplomacy condemned as "drowning the conscience of the colony in sherry and champagne".<sup>87</sup> In contrast, the narratorial voice in *My Chief and I* reflects a wide range of emotion, varying from light-heartedness and insouciance through impassioned, almost psycho-sexual longing, to a controlled, but bleak sense of despair. The wit and daring élan with which Colenso portrays Shepstone is also manifested in the risks she runs by placing herself in the text as a supernumerary character, and by referring directly to her father's stance against white oppression of black Africans, both gambits which might readily have disclosed her identity as author. Her first appearance is as the young lady in the horse-drawn omnibus with Wylde in Chapter III who thanks a fellow traveller for supporting her father's point of view and who is later identified to the narrator as "one of Bishop Colenso's daughters".<sup>88</sup> As Daymond points out in the introduction, Colenso's later appearance in the text as the unnamed author of a book "partly laid in Hong Kong", which is dismissed by Wylde as having been written by a woman who "had never been out of England in her life", is bound to have caused some amusement to "those in the know" for, at the time she wrote the novel, Colenso had spent hardly any time in England.<sup>89</sup>

Colenso's encomium of Durnford becomes at times a passionate brand of hero-worship, verging on idolatry, which chimes awkwardly with the persona and voice

<sup>86</sup>Lady Florence Dixie, née Douglas (1855 -1905) British writer, feminist, and adventurer, she was the *Morning Post* war correspondent in southern Africa during the Boer War of 1880-1. Her works include the pamphlet, *A Defence of Zululand and its King: Echoes from the Blue-books with an Appendix containing correspondence of the release of Cetshwayo etc.*, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1881), and a feminist utopian novel, *Gloriana, or the Revolution of 1900* (1890), which details the life and rise to power under male guise, of an imaginary first female prime minister of Britain.

<sup>87</sup>Colenso, *H.Z.I.*, pp. 79-80. Just prior to the publication of *The History of the Zulu War*, Frances Colenso's mother wrote: "Last mail brought us some proofs of the beginning of Fanny's Book on the Zulu War. I don't think we shall have another call from Sir G. Wolseley, i.e. if he reads or hears of F's account of his sherry and champagne campaign". (letter dated 9.4.1880, in Rees, 1958, p. 350)

<sup>88</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, pp. 17-18

<sup>89</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 122. 'Zandile': *Two Heroes* (1873); Daymond, introduction to *M.C.I.*, p. 15

of a male narrator. This incongruity is heightened by the piquant title of Chapter II, 'How We Managed Our Wedding', by Wylde's deployment of phrases such as "my late beloved Chief", and by Wylde's curious statement, "I think he began to suspect me of having committed the folly of falling in love in the colony, before it dawned upon him that he himself was the attraction", all of which suggest a flirtatiousness and a sexual yearning originating, it seems, in Colenso's own attachment to Durnford.<sup>90</sup> To the reader "in the know", this speaks of Colenso's devotion, but, for those ignorant of the author's gender, this must surely have contributed a curious, but powerful, homo-erotic charge to the text.

For those in the know the book is also tinged with a sense of poignancy, for although Chapter II describes Durnford and Wylde's organization of the mass marriage of newly-liberated slaves from Zanzibar, the narrator's words following the ceremony reveal as much about Durnford's character and serious intent, as about Colenso's longing for a normalized relationship:

There might have been something ludicrous in this performance had it been managed by any one else. But there was something in the simple earnestness and quiet dignity with which it was conducted, which took away all desire to make a joke of it. I could not have felt less inclined to laugh at my own wedding ceremony.<sup>91</sup>

Elsewhere in the book, the solemnity engendered by "simple earnestness and quiet dignity" is echoed in Colenso's own earnest protestations of Durnford's quiet courageousness and sense of honour through her mouthpiece, Wylde, and the bleak tone of the introduction to the 'Note'. Yet the governing voice perhaps sounds at its emptiest in the sentence with which Wylde concludes the book, "Natal will always be dear to me, for the sound of its name must ever be connected in my mind with that of - MY CHIEF", because here the words "MY CHIEF" stand apart in perpetuity from the other half of the title words, "and I".<sup>92</sup>

There are also inherent inconsistencies, by today's standards, in her approach to the nature of imperialism and to her idealization of Durnford. Her inability to detach herself entirely from the insistent condescension of an infantilizing and anthropologizing nineteenth-century Christian paternalism is reflected in her use of

---

<sup>90</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, pp. 54 & 128.

<sup>91</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 9.

<sup>92</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 130.

phrases such as “ignorant savages” to describe black Africans.<sup>93</sup> However, epithets such as these are frequently juxtaposed against commentary on the negative effects of imperialism. For example, the phrase “simple and honest, though untaught, savages” is followed by the observation that “the Government forces promptly taught the whole tribe that family affection and common humanity may be accounted as crimes”, thus indicating clearly that many of the lessons which indigenous races apprehend through their contact with white colonizers contaminate and alter innocent and trusting peoples whose own morality often appears to be superior to the double standards exemplified by some whites.<sup>94</sup>

Her portrayal of Durnford as the paradigm of Christian soldiery, and her argument for a more beneficent, more genuinely Christian brand of imperialism, reveal further contradictions. Despite her plangent criticism of imperialism, her comments appear to be directed at practices and individuals, rather than reflecting a belief that imperialism was wrong *per se*. Yet this is in line with her upbringing as a Bishop’s daughter and with her portrayal of Durnford as saviour and surrogate chief of the Putini, and it was to be many years before the right of whites to impose both Christianity and imperialism on other races was to be challenged. The fact that the Zulu people themselves named Bishop Colenso “‘Sokululeka’, the Father who brings freedom”, and “‘Sobantu’, the Father of his people”, and the fact that the Putini welcomed Durnford’s patriarchal care, suggest that it is also possible to conclude that white paternalism was not altogether unwelcome to some indigenous peoples, because the protection of certain kindly and well-disposed whites guarded them against the worst excesses of imperialism and the depredations of their neighbours.<sup>95</sup>

Finally, Colenso’s characterization of Durnford as a model Christian, kind and fatherly to Africans, is at variance with the image projected by her incorporation of the ‘Note’ into *My Chief and I* for here he becomes the glad warrior hero of Isandwvana, happy to go into battle against, and to kill, Africans:

“Could any man wish to die more happily than this? - covering a life which had been blighted with the memory of an undying glory, and receiving the affection of

---

<sup>93</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 42.

<sup>94</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 81.

<sup>95</sup>Rees, 1958, p. 258.

those who, by force of tradition were most prejudiced against him?"<sup>96</sup>

Although the chief point of the article she cites is the redemptive nature of Durnford's death, the fact that Colenso goes on to develop the image of Durnford as the 'Happy Warrior' in her sequel *Five Years Later*, by quoting directly from William Wordsworth's poem about Nelson, 'The Character of the Happy Warrior', and by stating "The whole of this poem is singularly applicable to the character of my Chief", indicates a conscious intent on her behalf to link Durnford's name into the wider rhetoric of the British 'Island Story'.<sup>97</sup> However, it also suggests that just as she was unable to free herself from the masculine discourse of Christian paternalism that subordinated indigenous peoples as well as women, she was also unable to free herself from the double-edged rhetoric promoting Christian morality on the one hand yet turning a blind eye to killing in the name of religion on the other.

**Trope and Counter-trope:  
Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland***

Like Colenso's *My Chief and I*, Olive Schreiner's short allegorical story, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, addresses the moral issues raised by the white displacement of black Africans, along with the concomitant exploitation of black African labour, and seeks to expose imperialist rhetoric as duplicitous. Written in August 1896 and published early in 1897, it is set against the background of the Ndebele and Shona Revolts of 1896-7 which were triggered in the wake of the Jameson Raid by the landgrabbing policies of Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company.<sup>98</sup> Deeply concerned by Rhodes' apparently callous disregard for black Africans, by the relentless advances of the Chartered Company across African territory, and by the machinations of the colonial government, Schreiner was determined to expose the role played by imperialist rhetoric in the exploitation of colonial power, and to reveal

---

<sup>96</sup>Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 55

<sup>97</sup>*Five Years Later* is not discussed in detail in this thesis as it was published posthumously in 1994, over a century after Colenso wrote it in 1882. William Wordsworth's poem, 'The Character of the Happy Warrior', was composed in December 1805 and early January 1806, and published in 1807. Wordsworth's note reads: "The above Verses were written soon after tidings had been received of the Death of Lord Nelson, which directed the Author's thoughts to the subject". (Wordsworth, William: 'The Character of the Happy Warrior,' in ed. Stephen Gill: *William Wordsworth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984, pp. 320-322 & p. 717) His lines in Colenso's footnote in *Five Years Later* run: "...who, if he be called upon to face/Some awful moment to which heaven has joined/Great issues, good or bad for human kind,/Is happy as a Lover; and attired/With sudden brightness, like a man inspired". (Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 156)

<sup>98</sup>Hereafter referred to as the BSAC, or the Chartered Company.

Rhodes and his co-directors as charlatans. The book was therefore aimed specifically at the British public, and calculated to influence an inquiry into Rhodes' management of the Chartered Company with the ultimate goal of achieving a change of government policy, both in London and in the Cape.

Rhodes had played a primary role in the establishment of the BSAC and in the foundation of Rhodesia. Having first arrived in Natal, aged seventeen years, in 1870, his early venture in cotton growing was unprofitable; however, he enjoyed considerably more success in diamond mining, which he interspersed with visits to England to take a degree at Oriel College, Oxford. By 1881, the year in which he graduated, he had utilized his connections in both countries to build up a considerable sphere of influence and to assemble the foundations of his wealth. That same year he not only bought the *Cape Argus* newspaper but he was also elected a member of the Cape Parliament. The formation of De Beers Consolidated Mines Company in 1888 supplied tangible evidence of Rhodes' financial security through his controlling interest in that company and its monopoly of diamond production. This proved influential in securing the royal charter for the BASC in October 1889, for although the British government was keen to maintain a policy of imperial expansion, other such ventures risked failure as a result of being under capitalised.<sup>99</sup> In return, Rhodes obtained an almost free hand to develop the Chartered Company; the BSAC could make treaties, form banks, own land, and establish a police force, with the proviso that existing African law was to be respected and all religions tolerated.

Yet it had not been Rhodes' fortune alone which had succeeded in convincing British officials at the seat of imperial government to grant the charter the British South Africa Company. In the first place the BSAC had been formed in March 1889 through the amalgamation of two prospecting companies, one of which was a syndicate in which Rhodes had interest and which claimed to have been successful in negotiating a treaty with Lobengula, king of the Ndebele, granting exclusive prospecting and mineral rights within his territory.<sup>100</sup> Although this treaty, known as the Rudd Concession, was later

<sup>99</sup>The Royal Niger Company and the Imperial British East Africa Company, chartered in 1879 and 1888 respectively.

<sup>100</sup>The Central Search Association and the Exploring Company. The Ndebele people occupied the area known as Matabeleland, east of the territory occupied by the Shona people which was known as Mashonaland.

repudiated by Lobengula, Rhodes was able to exaggerate its scope and use it as a powerfully persuasive tool in order to obtain the charter for the BSAC.<sup>101</sup> There were, furthermore, additional influences at work. Other European countries, namely Germany, Belgium and Portugal, were also taking a keen interest in empire-building through the acquisition and development of territory in Africa. Therefore Rhodes' goals and ambitions accorded with those of powerful lobbies in Britain for not only did European competition in Africa pose political and commercial threats, but it also conflicted with the aims of British missionary groups to Christianize Africa.<sup>102</sup>

Although, ironically, events were to prove that Rhodes' own interest in Africans was far from philanthropic, and that he saw indigenous peoples only as either the barrier to colonial expansion or as the providers of cheap labour, he was possessed of an extraordinary missionary zeal to expand the empire. This is reflected in his 'Confession of Faith', a clumsily-contrived personal testament, the contents of which he shared only with a few close male friends.<sup>103</sup> Written the day he was inducted into the Freemasons, the 'Confession' illuminates imperialist discourse by invoking the historical rhetoric of the 'Island Story' and showing how the service of this, in turn, parallels Christianity to become a form of religion. It starts with Rhodes' wish "to render myself useful to my country" and proposes the formation of "a secret society with but one object the furtherance of the British Empire" to replace the loss of the United States to Britain. He continues:

---

<sup>101</sup>The Rudd Concession, negotiated by Rhodes' agents, Charles Dunell Rudd, Francis Robert ('Matabele') Thompson, and James Rochford Maguire, on 30 October 1888, followed two earlier agreements made by Lobengula with whites. The first, in July 1887, negotiated by Pieter Johannes Grobler for the Transvaal, indicated that Lobengula subordinated his position to the Republic of Transvaal, would assist the Republic, put his troops at its disposal, permit hunting in his territory, and accept a resident consul with powers to try wrongdoers from the Transvaal within Ndebele territory. The second, negotiated by John Smith Moffat in February 1888, led the way for British expansion by acknowledging British influence in Ndebele and Shona territory. Under the Rudd Concession, Lobengula believed that in exchange for £100 per month, to be paid by Rhodes, a supply of arms and ammunition, and an armed gunboat on the Zambezi, he was granting rights to metals and minerals and permitting no more than ten white prospectors to obtain them. There was to be no digging near towns.

<sup>102</sup>Although the APS exhorted Lobengula not to concede too much, and the British South Africa Committee tried to safeguard African interests, British politicians were concerned by the annexation of African territory by other European powers, and events therefore swung in Rhodes' favour. Rhodes' territorial ambitions coincided largely with those of missionaries who wished their churches to be represented in Africa, rather than those of their European counterparts. Rotberg, Robert I.: *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, pp. 271 & 272.

<sup>103</sup>There are two manuscript versions of Rhodes' 'Confession': the first, in Rhodes' own writing, was written 2.6.77; the second, given in Flint's biography of Rhodes, is a copy by a clerk, with an additional final paragraph. Flint, John: *Cecil Rhodes*, Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1974, pp. 248-52 & p. 30.



We know the size of the world we know the total extent. Africa is still lying ready for us it is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race more of the best the most human, most honourable race the world possesses.

Overlooking Rhodes' puerile mode of expression, and the fact that his vision of a secret society to save the empire is reminiscent of schoolboy adventure stories, the racist assumptions manifested in the 'Confession' have clear links to a sense of religious superiority. The phrase "most human, most honourable" privileges Anglo-Saxons as superior whilst also abrogating the individual and collective rights of Africans, and even positioning them as less human. Significantly, the crusading role of duty and devotion to empire he envisions for the secret society is elaborated in the terms of religious zeal, suggesting implicitly the vocation of priesthood:

What has been the main cause of the success of the Romish Church? The fact that every enthusiast, call it if you like every madman finds employment in it. Let us form the same kind of society a Church for the extension of the British Empire.

The members of such a society should, he argues, be those whose background denies them the means and opportunity to realize their ambition for their country, such as the younger son who is "ever troubled by a sort of inward deity urging him on to high and noble deeds". His belief in a 'Church of Empire', the words "inward deity", the proposition that members should be "bound by oath" and that they should be maintained by the society, and that they should be used to further its ends wherever needed within the empire, together with the secrecy he proposes, all indicate a circle of influence which strongly resembles a priesthood. Whilst there does not appear to be any evidence that such a secret society was ever established by Rhodes, he was the conspicuous hub at the centre of a powerful network of men sharing an enthusiasm for imperial expansion, an enthusiasm which matched that of Christian missionaries in its ardour to convert believers to the cause.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>104</sup>Rhodes drew up a series of wills leaving his estate to the Secretary of State of the Colonies for the furtherance of the British empire. The first, in 1872, predates the 'Confession', but the fourth, dated 1888, gives insight into Rhodes' conviction that the expansion of empire was a religion. It leaves money to Lord Rothschild as a trustee, and instructs him to "take Constitution Jesuits if obtainable and insert English Empire for Roman Catholic Religion". (Rotberg, 1988, p. 234 & p. 714 n.30, citing letter C.J.R to Rothschild, 24.6.1888) Rhodes' confidants included Captain Charles Warren, Sidney Shippard, Joseph Orpen, Francis Henry Orpen, John Padden, H.J. Feltham, W.T. Stead, and trustees Lord Rothschild, L.S. Jameson, Lord Rosebery, Lord Alfred Milner, Earl Albert Grey, Lewis Michell, and Bouchier F. Hawksley. (Rotberg, 1988, pp. 101, 103, 150, 415, 678)

Rhodes was acutely conscious of the power and role of rhetoric in both the propagation of imperialist discourse and in the manipulation of public and gubernatorial opinion to fulfil his ambitions. The 'Confession' concludes with the words, "The Society should inspire and even own portions of the press for the press rules the mind of the people". His acquisition of the *Cape Argus* in 1881 was followed by a number of moves to place influential articles in the British press during the period in which he was campaigning to obtain the royal charter for the BSAC in 1889. Robert I. Rotberg details how Rhodes paid the journalist J. Scott Keltie to write favourable articles for *The Times*; likewise the Reverend John Verschoyle, deputy editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, was remunerated for articles written in support of Rhodes' venture; Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., who also wrote for the *Fortnightly Review* received shares in the BSAC. Rhodes sought out the friendship and support of W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and a pre-eminent member of the South Africa Committee, in whom he confided his dream of the secret society of empire; in 1889, financed by Rhodes, Stead established the *Review of Reviews* and used it to support Rhodes' ambitions; two thousand pounds of Rhodes' money, too, was used to settle a libel judgement against Stead. Additional influence in the press was accumulated through Rhodes' cultivation of even more journalists. Henry Hamilton Johnston, writer and explorer, who had written in *The Times* proposing the expansion of British territory in Africa, was also encouraged by Rhodes to lend his support, and in return Rhodes showed his appreciation by donating the sum of two thousand pounds towards Johnston's expeditions with the promise of ten thousand pounds a year in the future. Rhodes' approaches to Flora Shaw, colonial correspondent of *The Times*, also paid great dividends in both the short and long terms, for she was later, in February 1897, to prove an able witness on his behalf before the South Africa Committee into the Jameson Raid.<sup>105</sup>

According to Rotberg, this Committee hearing was "the bar of justice before which Olive Schreiner had wanted to propel Rhodes since 1891".<sup>106</sup> It is, therefore, no coincidence that Schreiner's book *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* was published in February 1897 whilst the House of Commons enquiry was running, as her aim was to expose the false premises behind Rhodes' rhetoric, to influence British

---

<sup>105</sup>Rotberg, 1988, pp. 13, 279-82, & 529.

<sup>106</sup>Rotberg 1988, p. 548.

public opinion against him, and thereby to achieve a change of government policy. Her intent to address the British public is evident in textual footnotes which gloss the Afrikaans words she uses, and in her private correspondence. A letter to her brother, written just before Christmas 1896, states:

Now it is to this public, which is really the great British public apart from the speculators and military men on the one hand, and apart from the ignorant mass of the street on the other, that my little book is addressed ...It is for them and not at all for the South African public (who would not understand it) that the book is written. They must know where the injustices and oppression really lies (*sic*), and turn down their thumbs at the right moment.<sup>107</sup>

Although Schreiner diffidently calls it "my little book", she was aware that it would provoke extreme reactions. Not only was her open attack on Rhodes, and on imperial policy, iconoclasm, but the imagery of the book was particularly shocking. She was, therefore, laying herself open to legal action and risking both her reputation as a writer and her much-needed income.<sup>108</sup>

*Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* is a brief allegory in which Peter, a trooper in the Chartered Company's armed force to quell the Shona Revolt of 1896, becomes separated from his troop and, obliged to spend the night alone on a koppje in the veld, is visited by figure of Christ. In the course of a night-long conversation, Peter, who fails to recognize the visitant, is nevertheless confronted with the inconsistencies of an imperial policy which permits rape, pillage, and other atrocities in the name of Christianity, and, being encouraged to discover his own conscience, moves from symbolic darkness to dawning enlightenment. The story contains echoes of the allegory of the Hunter in *The Story of an African Farm*, reflecting Schreiner's adherence to a style she evolved as her own in that book, and in many of her short stories, with its austere, almost dreamlike, evocation of the African landscape, and her haunting exploration of existential *angst*. Indeed, because of the significant role occupied by allegory in Christian literature, functioning as it does as an extended

---

<sup>107</sup>Rive, 1988, p. 299; letter to W.P. Schreiner, dated December 1896.

<sup>108</sup>"My little book comes out on the 17th of February. I was offered £2,000 ...if I would take out a few passages which of course I wouldn't so I've only got £1,400. The publishers are all afraid of the libel action. I am myself doubtful whether Rhodes will dare to appear in a law court." "After I had finished *Peter Halket* I spent three days and nights almost entirely without sleep pacing up and down my verandah, trying to decide whether I should publish it or not. I believed that Rhodes and the Chartered Company would proceed against me; and I felt sure that the matter would kill me, as it did to a very large extent." (Letters to W.P. Schreiner, 1897 & 29 June 1898, in Rive, 1988, p. 290, 300, & 333)

metaphor to convey multidimensional levels of moral meaning in the Bible and in texts such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrims' Progress* (1678), it is a particularly apposite form for Schreiner's twin themes of imperial irresponsibility and Christian responsibility in *Trooper Peter Halket*, allowing her to deploy a web of biblical and secular imagery to connote different layers of meaning.

The book is divided into two parts. The longer opening section furnishes an early usage of the stream of consciousness technique as the omniscient narrator draws close to Peter's naive sensibility through his "connected chains" of thought, in order to illustrate an immature and unquestioning acceptance of imperialist rhetoric and imperialist practices.<sup>109</sup> With the arrival of the stranger whose persistent and urgent questioning of Peter becomes a lengthy sermon incorporating a series of parables, Schreiner generates a change of tone and pace to reflect the stranger's serious and considered approach and Peter's growing capacity to absorb the new ideas presented to him. There follows a short postlude, mediated through the worldly-wise consciousness of an unnamed third person narrator who witnesses the events leading to Peter's death. Together with the acerbic comments of bystanders, on Rhodes and the Chartered Company, the postlude serves to elucidate the cynical exploitation of colonial rhetoric to Schreiner's audience.

The contrast between Schreiner's counter-discourse and the imperialist rhetoric employed by Rhodes and the Chartered Company is signalled by her use of oppositional frames to the text. The dedicatory epigraph, addressed to Sir George Grey "once Governor of the Cape Colony", eulogizing him as a "great good man ...remembered ... as representing the noblest attributes of colonial rule" and as an example of "uncorruptible justice and broad humanity", invokes the rhetoric of benign paternalistic imperialism. However, a photograph positioned opposite the title page in the first edition stands in marked contrast (fig. 4.3). It depicts the aftermath of a punishment hanging: three black men are suspended from a tree by nooses around their necks; a semicircle of informally-dressed white male spectators face the camera, their

---

<sup>109</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 24. William James (1842-1910), brother of Henry James, is frequently credited as originator of the phrase "stream of consciousness" in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890).

faces devoid of horror at the sight before their eyes, their stances suggestive of relaxation.

Despite the fact that the illustration is merely captioned "(From a photograph)", there is evidence that it was the currency of imperialist discourse in southern Africa at the time. Apart from the copy which Schreiner was able to obtain, the same photograph is documented as appearing in at least one edition of Frank Sykes' contemporaneous account of the Shona Revolt entitled *With Plumer in Matabeleland* (1897).<sup>110</sup> Robert Baden-Powell, whose particular fondness for cowboy imagery and hunting down Africans indicates his enjoyment of the excesses of muscular imperialism, pasted a further copy in his scrapbook of campaign memorabilia under the title 'The Christmas Tree'.<sup>111</sup> Both the image itself, which is at cruel variance with the caption, and his caption, which recalls the Christian imagery of the crucifixion, are perverse. Nevertheless, by causing Peter Halket to refer specifically to "a photograph of the niggers hanging, and our fellows standing round smoking", and "the spree they had up Bulawayo way, hanging those three niggers for spies", in the course of his conversation with the Christ-figure, Schreiner introduces genuine evidence to her text to testify to the callous treatment of black Africans by white settlers, and to the distortions of an imperial discourse which sanctions the casual utilization of Christian rhetoric to justify or gloss over such practices.<sup>112</sup>

Further graphic images of the warfare enacted against the displaced Shona people are generated, through Peter's stream of consciousness as he sits alone on the koppje, to contrast with the privilege and position he confidently anticipates will be his when he receives his allocation of their land as a reward for serving as a volunteer. Just as Schreiner uses the photograph to draw in evidence of the tragic actuality behind imperialist rhetoric, so she also replicates a passage from a colonial administrator's

---

<sup>110</sup>What rebel spies were caught were summarily tried and hanged. There is a tree, known as the hanging tree, to the north of the town, which did service as gallows. Hither the doomed men were conveyed. On the ropes being fastened to their necks, they were made to climb along an overhanging branch, and thence were pushed or compelled to jump into space after 'a last look at Bulawayo'. Frank W. Sykes: *With Plumer in Matabeleland; An Account of the Operations of the Matabeleland Relief Force During the Rebellion of 1896*, Archibald Constable & Co., London, 1897, pp. 27-8.

<sup>111</sup>Jeal, 1989, p. 175.

<sup>112</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 78 & 77.

letter to lay bare the horror behind the tropes of imperialism. The original, from Rhodes' confrère and trustee, Sir Sidney Shippard, reads:

I must confess that it would offer me sincere and lasting satisfaction if I could see the Matabele Matjaha cut down by our rifles and machine guns like a cornfield by a reaping machine.<sup>113</sup>

Peter Halket remembers:

Then again he was working the maxim gun, but it seemed to him it was more like the reaping machine he used to work in England, and that what was going down before it was not yellow corn, but black men's heads; and he thought when he looked back they lay behind him in rows like the corn in sheaves.<sup>114</sup>

The simile equating the horrifying efficiency of the automatic guns to the pastoral image of the corn harvest, not only connotes the callous commercial exploitation of Africa and its peoples and the invasion of a rural society by an industrial society, but it also suggests that the harvest reaped by white colonialists will be a bitter one.<sup>115</sup>

Building from this bleak vision of a grim imperial harvest, Schreiner develops a graphic tropology in which seeds, harvests, eggs, and an unborn mixed-race child symbolize the viability of life but their destruction and unrealized potential represent the futility of muscular imperialism. Images of colonial forces razing African villages to the ground, burning granaries, and despoiling mealie fields, mirror the wanton destructiveness of Peter's childhood hobby of bird nesting. Whereas the child Peter killed birds before they even hatched, the adult Peter and his fellow troopers, under orders from Rhodes and the Chartered Company, kill off all hope of a spiritually enriching relationship with Africa and its people before it, too, can be realized. Yet Peter also represents undeveloped potential. Although he has the pubescent "growth of early manhood" on his face, Schreiner suggests that the outward trappings of masculinity, and the ability to exert power over weaker beings such as women and to procreate, do not signify true manhood, nor do they represent the capacity to pursue a fruitful relationship.<sup>116</sup> It is apparent that Peter has raped at least one black woman, and has 'acquired' two others, one of whom he later impregnates, in exchange for "a

<sup>113</sup>Letter from Sir Sidney Godolphin Alexander Shippard to Sir Francis Newton, dated 29.10.1888, cited in John S. Galbraith: *Crown and Charter: The Early Days of the British South Africa Company*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974, p. 68.

<sup>114</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 40.

<sup>115</sup>The Gatling gun invented in 1861-2 by Richard Jordan Gatling predated the maxim gun. The latter, gun, first used in Africa in the Ndebele War 1893, was invented by Sir Hiram J. Maxim, U.S.-born Briton, and the date of invention is variously given as 1881, 1883, & 1884.

<sup>116</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 19.

'vatje' of Old Dop'''.<sup>117</sup> Certain that the woman who is expecting his child "'did away with it'", Peter believes this to be due to intrinsic failings in the woman, rather than in himself:

they've no hearts, these niggers; they'd think nothing of doing that with a white man's child. They've no hearts; they'd rather go back to a black man, however well you've treated them.<sup>118</sup>

His inability to comprehend that, in all possibility, the woman could not bring herself to bear a child to a representative of colonial brutality, testifies to his lack of mature understanding. In allegorical terms, this also bears witness to the basic immaturity of muscular imperialism, as well as signifying more generally that Afro-European relationships based on colonial force are unlikely to bear fruit.

The symbolic system developed by Schreiner to counter the tropes of muscular imperialism is contiguous with the doubled meanings generated by her allegorical figure, the unrecognised Christ-figure, and the didacticism of Biblical parables. She modulates the bird imagery originating in the unhatched eggs of Peter's childhood to foreground parallels between Peter's mother's Christian benevolence and that epitomized by the Christ-figure on the one hand, and also to condemn its obverse, colonial violence, on the other hand. Peter's mother abhors bullying and is associated with "fat white ducklings", which she keeps only for their eggs and feathers and whom she allows to die "'of old age'''.<sup>119</sup> The Christ-figure exhorts the feeding of ravens, symbols of God's providence, in a form of language reminiscent of scriptural passages: "'The young ravens have meat given to them, ...and the lions go down to the streams to drink'''.<sup>120</sup> Accordingly, the dark birds' hunger comes to denote the spiritual need of black Africans for Christian compassion, whereas the cosseted white ducks symbolize the comfortable, unthreatened life of the white community. In marked contrast, the Christ-figure's parable of rapacious vultures focuses on the insidious colonial policy of 'divide and rule' which played a large part in enabling the British acquisition of Mashonaland and Matabeleland; it is, therefore, intended to expose the fact that the

---

<sup>117</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 59; this is glossed by Schreiner as "a little cask of Cape brandy".

<sup>118</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 69.

<sup>119</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 24 & 79

<sup>120</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 76. The feeding of ravens is mentioned in Job 38:41, Psalms 147:9, and Luke 12:24.

stock in trade of Rhodes and his fellow directors is the manipulation of rhetoric to prey on their fellow beings:

“Then he who came first flew from one of the beasts to the other, and sat upon their necks, and put his beak within their ears. And he flew from one to the other and flapped his wings in their faces till the beasts were blinded, and each believed it was his fellow who attacked him. And they fell to, and fought; they gored one another’s sides till the field was red with blood and the ground shook beneath them. The birds sat by and watched; and when the blood flowed they walked round and round. And when the strength of the two beasts was exhausted they fell to earth. Then the birds settled down upon them, and feasted ...”<sup>121</sup>

As Schreiner is careful to divulge later in the text, Rhodes’ control of colonial discourse, and the flow of information to the centres of government in the Cape and in London, was almost total: “All ...wires are edited before they go down; only what the Company want to go, go through”.<sup>122</sup>

The absence of any moral order in the newly-formed colony is reflected in the way that the misuse of language permeates all levels of white society. Peter’s argot in the early part of the book reflects his aspiration to conform to the type of virility exemplified by muscular imperialism in the well-worn phrases and profanities of the hardened trooper, such as “By God!”, “By gad!”, and “Why, the devil!”.<sup>123</sup> However, his abuse of the name of God and miscalling of the devil also foregrounds the book’s conclusion, “There is no God in Mashonaland”.<sup>124</sup> The apparently approving repetition of the fact that Rhodes is “death on niggers” suggests that the phrase has become common currency and has been emptied of its real meaning by constant iteration.<sup>125</sup> Lest her British audience fails to be aware of the impact of the words, Schreiner pointedly brings to mind the violence they imply by juxtaposing them to Peter’s discussion of the infamous ‘Strop Bill’, a measure supported by Rhodes, and to Rhodes’ words, which she differentiates in italics, “*I prefer land to niggers*”.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, pp. 166-7.

<sup>122</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 234.

<sup>123</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, pp. 71, 74, & 90.

<sup>124</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 261.

<sup>125</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, pp. 81 & 83.

<sup>126</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 82. Rhodes supported the ‘Strop Bill,’ or Masters and Servants Act Amendment Bill, when it was first introduced in June 1890; this was designed to legalize the flogging of black farm servants. However, when it was reintroduced a year later, perceiving that it was likely to split the cabinet, he refrained from supporting it and it was defeated. (Rotberg, 1988, pp. 359-60) Schreiner cites Rhodes’ support of the ‘Strop Bill’ as one reason for her strong antipathy to him. (Rive, 1988, pp. 211, 279, 165)



The comment passed on Rhodes, in the postlude, is worldly-wise and cynical. Rhodes' airy dismissal of calls for his resignation in the wake of the abortive Jameson Raid, "*Let resignation wait. We fight the Matabele again to-morrow*", is also revealed as the currency of colonial discourse.<sup>127</sup> Positioned adjacent to the Colonial Englishman's remark "It's a damned convenient thing to have a war like this to turn on and off", it foregrounds Rhodes' callous exploitation of black Africans and indicates the superior firepower of the British.<sup>128</sup> It is significant, too, that the sequential ridicule of Rhodes as "the Great Panjandrum" follows, branding him as a pretentious potentate and purveyor of gobbledegook or empty rhetoric.<sup>129</sup> Schreiner's iconoclasm is completed by the Colonial's reference to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the Bible, and the statue, clearly intended to be Rhodes, "whose thighs and belly were of brass, and its feet of mud".<sup>130</sup> Not only does this portray Rhodes as a flawed character with feet of clay, but also, because it echoes the injunctions of the Ten Commandments to worship only the one true God and not to worship graven images, it suggests that he is a false idol.

The deployment of Christian iconography foregrounds the extent to which imperialist rhetoric has drifted from philanthropic ideals to 'civilize' Africa through the dissemination of Christian values. Deeper meaning accrues to the image of the gibbet tree in the prefatory photograph with Schreiner's depiction of a similar tree as the place where Peter is shot dead by a British officer for releasing the condemned black prisoner from Lo Magundis, and as the place where the prisoner is held. The black man appears to be part of this tree, hanging as he does "against the white stem, so closely bound to it that they seemed one".<sup>131</sup> Described by Schreiner as "a short stunted tree; its thick white stem gnarled and knotted" with "two misshapen branches, like arms, stretched out on either side", it is represented as cruciform and strangely humanized.<sup>132</sup> By emblemizing it as the Cross and signposting similarities between Peter Halket's sacrificial death for black mankind and Christ's crucifixion, Schreiner draws on

---

<sup>127</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 209. This cable, dated 13.5.1896, rebuffs Chamberlain's request that Rhodes resign his directorship of the Chartered Company because of the Jameson Raid; also cited in Rotberg, 1988, p. 556.

<sup>128</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, pp. 208-9.

<sup>129</sup>After a character in an 18th century nonsense play by Samuel Foote, *The Great Panjandrum* (1755); Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, pp. 204 & 210.

<sup>130</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 210; Daniel 2:32-33.

<sup>131</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 249.

<sup>132</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 195.

biblical tropology in the epistle of Peter proclaiming Christ's exemplary act of self-sacrifice "in his own body on the tree".<sup>133</sup> Her insistence on the shape of the tree and the whiteness of its trunk therefore suggests that the tree itself represents the way in which black Africa remains bound to white races in perpetuity in a revised form of slavery through the medium of the dubious Christianity of muscular imperialism, unless white men are prepared to sacrifice self-interest and colonial greed. The similarities between Peter Simon Halket who says three times to the Christ-figure "I don't know you from Adam", and his biblical namesake, Simon Peter, the acknowledged leader of the apostles who thrice denies all knowledge of Christ, signify that Halket's ultimate decision to embrace true Christian values marks him out as a paradigm for all those purporting to be Christians.<sup>134</sup>

Although Schreiner supplants muscular imperialism's brutality and its rhetorical projection of a quasi-Christian ideology with the reassertion of the moral precepts of the Bible as the guiding ethic of colonial rule, the form of Christianity she envisages is based on matriarchal, rather than on patriarchal, values. Like *The Story of an African Farm*, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* rejects the phallogocentrism of Christianity, but whereas pantheism is suggested as the solution to the existential void depicted in the former, the latter privileges the moral influence of women. Even the Christ-figure is feminized and aligned to Peter's mother through Peter's remark, "I've been wondering ever since you came, who it was you reminded me of. It's my mother! You're not like her in the face, but when your eyes look at me it seems to me as if it was she looking at me".<sup>135</sup> As a washerwoman whose role it is to wash away physical rather than metaphorical stains, Peter's mother represents the dignity of women's labour at the metropolitan centre. However, by representing purity, she also becomes a female embodiment of Christ's potential to cleanse the world of its sins and of his morality. Furthermore, Schreiner's representation of the female archetype who, repelled by cannibalism, releases the human victim intended for the pot from the tree where he had been bound, saying "I like not the taste of man-flesh; men are too like me; I cannot eat them", prefigures Peter's release of the Lo Magundis man.<sup>136</sup> At the

---

<sup>133</sup>*The Bible* (King James Version), 1 Peter, 2:24.

<sup>134</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, pp. 72 & 73.

<sup>135</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 72.

<sup>136</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 146.

same time this claims for women an Ur-history previously denied by male control of historical rhetoric, and asserts a long lineage of female morality predating the introduction of Christianity, a religion firmly rooted on, and within, hegemonic discourse.

In Chapter Five of this thesis I discuss in more detail the representation of indigenous women by colonial women writers. However, it is important, at this stage, to stress that the ethical principles which Schreiner attributes to womankind, rather than to mankind, are not solely inscribed within *white* women. Criticism is often levelled at Schreiner's work for her perceived lack of attention to the displacement of black women by colonialism and by colonial women in particular. In an otherwise sympathetic and perceptive analysis of Schreiner's work, Anne McClintock writes of Schreiner:

it is worth noting that her anguished denunciation of the commodification of white women in prostitution and marriage does not extend to the domestic commodification of African women by these same white women, who escape her literary censure.<sup>137</sup>

Although it is true that black women do figure as the liminal, servile adjuncts of colonial women in some of Schreiner's stories, in *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, which McClintock has chosen to exclude from an extensive list of works by Schreiner discussed in *Imperial Leather*, not only is the commodification of black women by white men examined, but the role of black women as workers and as upholders of moral principles matches that epitomized by Peter's mother. Laura Chrisman does note black female resistance to colonization, but links this to the "highly visible leadership roles taken by women in the *Chimurengas*", or uprisings, whereas I read Schreiner's focus on black women's agency as a broader feminist statement foregrounding the intrinsic value to all societies, whether black or white, of female moral influence.<sup>138</sup> In Schreiner's complex iconography, the recurring image of the cave as a place of shelter and of death through self-sacrifice recalls Christ's tomb, but it is associated with women in particular when the young, black, female fugitive described by the Christ-figure gives birth and escapes with the assistance of an older black woman, who gives up her own rations in order that the younger woman and her baby might survive. In defiance of the tropes of muscular imperialist rhetoric which

---

<sup>137</sup>McClintock, 1995, p. 272.

<sup>138</sup>Chrisman, Laura: *Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Schreiner, and Plaatje*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 139.

render the landscape and indigenous women as sexualized objects for the gratification of white male power, and in marked contrast to the oppressive negativity, destructiveness, and sterility of the tropology of patriarchal colonization presented by Schreiner, black femininity is clearly associated with the cave. This, in turn, comes to symbolize the womb, with its connotations of rebirth, female fertility, and maternal nurturing, as well as with Christian regeneration.

In *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, Schreiner's vision of releasing a beneficent matriarchy from the thralldom of patriarchy is framed by her understanding of the correspondence between the control of historical discourse and the subjection of indigenous peoples and of women. The book therefore attempts to expose the mechanism of patriarchal hegemony through its exploration of the links between class, race, and gender, and it focuses on the exploitation of labour as one key area of correspondence. In Schreiner's exposé of muscular imperialism, the rape of the countryside is paralleled to the appropriation of black women as sexual objects either in rape, or as household slaves whose usefulness also lies in the units of work they provide, so that white male promiscuity is clearly linked both to force and to capitalist acquisitiveness. Although, as Cherry Clayton points out, Peter's exchange of brandy for the two black women he covets "extends and vulgarizes the indigenous practice of *lobola* (bridewealth), in which women were goods to be exchanged for cattle", McClintock argues that "(*lobolo* was ...a symbolic, rather than a commercial exchange whereby women's labor power was embodied in movable herds of cattle and exchanged among men across time and space".<sup>139</sup> Thus Schreiner's depiction of the two women Peter acquires as good workers, as he "didn't need to buy a sixpence of food for them in six months, and ...used to sell green mealies and pumpkins to all the fellows about", not only contradicts the trope of black laziness, but moves her work towards an interrogation of colonial capitalism by foregrounding Peter's profit from his exploitation of their labour.<sup>140</sup> More importantly still, viewed from the perspective of twentieth- and twenty-first century postcolonial studies, the appropriation of black women into white service, along with the imposition of hut taxes which forced Africans to participate in a cash economy, can be seen as interventions destined to

<sup>139</sup>Clayton, Cherry: *Olive Schreiner*, Twayne (Simon & Schuster Macmillan), New York, 1997, p. 97; McClintock, 1995, pp. 254-5.

<sup>140</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 60.

destabilize and emasculate African societies, because indigenous African economies were dependent upon the labour of wives to provide adequate supplies of food so that men could serve as warriors.<sup>141</sup>

As a washerwoman, Peter's mother is also identified as a female unit of labour subjected within a capitalist society, but whereas the two black African women are subjected through constructions of *race* and gender, Peter's mother is subjected through constructions of *class* and gender. Interestingly, Schreiner asserts an agency and a mobility for black women which is not shared by Peter's mother. Peter's aspirations for upward social mobility include a determination to escape his humble origins so that "(n)o one would ask what ...(his) mother had been; it wouldn't matter", and are facilitated by aspects of muscular imperialism: his physical power through the Maxim gun, his stake in colonial plunder, and his exploitation of black labour.<sup>142</sup> In contrast, his mother's social position, like that of the working-class women described by Catherine Helen Spence in *Clara Morison*, is relatively static as it can only be improved through marriage. Clayton argues that the black African women in Schreiner's story are "(c)ompletely powerless and hunted like animals", and that they are "even more damagingly stereotyped and bartered than the white women of Schreiner's other novels". Yet it is apparent that they prefigure the defiant strength, resourcefulness, and independence of Jean Rhys's Creole character, Christophine, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966).<sup>143</sup> Just as the women in the cave work out a means of survival, the two women Peter has acquired outwit him by tricking him into handing over ammunition and, like Christophine, effect their exit. Black female resistance is symbolized by their abandonment of the dresses and shawls he has given them, on the one hand, and the implicit suggestion, on the other, that they are responsible for killing the man from whom Peter 'bought' them who was "'found at his hut door with his throat cut'".<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup>McClintock, 1995, p. 255.

<sup>142</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 36.

<sup>143</sup>Clayton, 1997, p. 97.

<sup>144</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, p. 65.

### The empire re-imaged

The reception of both *My Chief and I* and *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* was mixed. As 'Atherton Wylde' was an unknown writer, *My Chief and I* does not appear to have been reviewed and the only praise for the book from contemporaneous sources comes from Edward Durnford's compilation of his brother's letters, *A Soldier's Life and Work in South Africa 1872-1879: A Memoir of the Late Colonel A.W. Durnford* (1882). Like Colenso, Edward Durnford was attempting to restore his brother's reputation, so his commendation of *My Chief and I* is, perhaps, to be expected.<sup>145</sup> Despite the fact that *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* was widely reviewed because of Schreiner's earlier success with *The Story of An African Farm* (1883), it was not well received by reviewers. Overlooking the presence and silent testimony of the photograph, many condemned the book as unfair to Rhodes, maintaining that there was no evidence for Schreiner's accusations. A review by 'Q' is typical. He praises "her wonderful skill and delicacy" but maintains that "truths of this sort ought to be stated plainly, and ought to be accompanied by chapter and verse".<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, the book sold well, but by the time the second edition was printed the offending photograph had been removed.

In holding up a magical 'metamir' to reflect what they see as the true history of imperialism, Colenso and Schreiner show that the control of historical discourse is crucial to the imperialist project. They successfully put forward alternative histories of indigenous peoples, and, in Schreiner's case, ascribe a degree of agency to black women. However, because they resort to the discourse of Christianity to contradict the pseudo-Christian rhetoric of muscular imperialism, both, as daughters of missionaries, remain tantalizingly thirled to the patriarchal project they are aiming to criticize. Colenso, in particular, weakens her own cause, because by utilizing the trope of the Christian Soldier which is central to muscular imperialist discourse, she becomes blind to Durnford's complicity in imperial aggression; whereas Schreiner's portrayal of Peter as the Un-Christian Soldier in *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, with its direct reference to *The Bible* and his late conversion to Christianity, is altogether more powerful.

---

<sup>145</sup>Daymond, Introduction to Colenso, *M.C.I.*, p. 40.

<sup>146</sup>'Q' (Arthur T. Quiller-Couch): 'Review of *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*', in *The Speaker*, February 27, 1897, p. 253.

Both works are important in relation to feminist and postcolonial literary criticism. Colenso's adoption of a male pseudonym, her textual format, and her hero-worship of Durnford, suggest that *My Chief and I* belongs in the phase Showalter designates as feminine. Yet Colenso's anti-colonialist agenda, and her understanding of the role of history in the imperial project, mark her as a protofeminist. Schreiner's critique of muscular imperialism is more overtly feminist, and can be situated in Showalter's feminist phase, but it, too, illustrates the latent inconsistencies of nineteenth-century feminism. Schreiner appeals in *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* to the "Mother-heart", or collective conscience of English women, to listen to "cries to it from overseas and across continents the voice of the child-peoples"; but her appeal, addressed "to the women of England '...who repose in sumptuous houses, with children on ...(their) knees'", is to middle and upper-class women, and not to working-class women, like Peter's mother, who is inscribed as the epitome of Christian values.<sup>147</sup> Paradoxically, therefore, Schreiner asserts the rights of black women but Peter's mother is stigmatized and marginalized by class in the manner that some colonial writing tends to marginalize and stigmatize indigenous peoples by race. Nevertheless, both books represent serious attempts to analyse imperial power: not only do they recognize the fact that imperialism is upheld, and even propelled, by the rhetoric beamed out by the distorting mirrors of historical discourse, but they also expose the exploitation of indigenous peoples, showing it to be a new form of slavery.

§§§

---

<sup>147</sup>Schreiner, *T.P.H.*, pp. 159-160.

## Chapter 5

### Shadow Sisters: Alterity in the Glass

You were one of the dark children  
I wasn't allowed to play with -  
riverbank campers, the wrong colour  
(I couldn't turn you white) ...

...The easy Eden-dreamtime then  
in a country of birds and trees  
made me your shadow-sister, child,  
dark girl I couldn't play with.<sup>1</sup>

§§§

In my previous chapter I show that Colenso and Schreiner's subversions of historico-imperialist rhetoric acknowledge its close imbrication with the discourses of race, class, and gender. Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* notes that the "intersections of race, class, and gender have become increasingly important within the discourse of feminism", and comments on the contributions made in this respect by Jean Rhys, Doris Lessing, Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, and Margaret Atwood, stating they have all "drawn an analogy between the relationships of men and women and those of the imperial power and colony".<sup>2</sup> Rhys and Lessing straddle the era of empire and the period when imperialism was on the wane, however I argue in this chapter that the challenge to the hegemonic discourse of race is a largely unremarked feature of colonial women's writing. Not only did many colonial women writers seek to correct the distortions of this discourse which reflected black races as other, and which contended that they should be subjugated or even feared, but also many women expressed the view that black women and white women shared common experiences and were, therefore, sisters under the skin.

In the opening chapter of *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter explains that in arguing for a female literary tradition she draws on analyses of minority literatures, or "literary subcultures", as she calls them, "such as Jewish, Canadian, Anglo-Indian, or even American", to identify phases within the female literary canon. Although she notes, almost in passing, that the phase which she terms as 'feminist' is characterized as one of "protest against (the) ...standards and values" of the dominant tradition, and also as a phase of "advocacy of minority rights and values, including a demand for

<sup>1</sup>Stanzas two and fourteen, from Judith Wright's poem, 'Two Dreamtimes', dedicated to fellow poet, Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal), in Judith Wright: *A Human Pattern: Selected Poems*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1990, pp. 166-169; first published in *Alive, Poems 1971-2* (1973).

<sup>2</sup>Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin: *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*, Routledge, London, 1989, pp. 175 & 31.



autonomy", she fails to expand on this aspect of women's writing in relation to indigenous rights.<sup>3</sup> A recently-written final chapter, in the latest revised and expanded edition of the book, does acknowledge the scope and racial diversity of women's writing in English published in the latter half of the twentieth century, yet even this new passage does not attempt to explore links between the feminist and postcolonial themes of the new multiracial women's literatures written in English, nor does it formulate associations with those women writers who precede them.<sup>4</sup> Although the writings of both Olive Schreiner and Doris Lessing feature in the body of the work, they are discussed in the context of feminism, and not in respect of their colonial status or their opposition to racist ideology.

This chapter therefore explores the presentation of race, gender, and class in a selection of works by colonial women writers. It argues that, rather than constituting a recent phenomenon, women, and colonial women writers in particular, have long recognized the operation of hierarchical ordering strategies within patriarchal discourses, and have made associations between claims for civil rights for subjugated races and those for white women's rights.<sup>5</sup> It begins with a brief overview of colonial women writers' representation of race throughout the period, focusing on the ways in which they sought to break down the barriers of racism and to project black women sympathetically either as sisters, or as mirror images of the white female self. It moves on to examine the discourse of race, especially as it applied in India, and, with close reference to texts by Flora Annie Steel, Maud Diver, and Sara Jeannette Duncan, argues that colonial feminist writers not only challenged constructions of race, but they also countered 'imperial feminism' organized from the metropolitan centre. As in the previous chapter, imperialist historicism continues to play an important role because of its interaction with the discourses of race, gender, and class.

---

<sup>3</sup>Showalter, Elaine: *A Literature of Their Own*, Virago, London, 1999, p. 13; first published by Virago, London, 1978

<sup>4</sup>"With contemporary mobility and the popularity of travel writing, British women writers have abandoned Austen's two little inches of ivory for an international canvas ranging from the Middle West to the Antarctic. From Jean Rhys, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, and Anita Desai to Arundhati Roy, Grace Nichol, and Buchi Emecheta, British women writers come from hybrid and multiracial backgrounds - African, Caribbean, Indian, and Asian." Showalter, 1999, p. 322.

<sup>5</sup>Aphra Behn's novel, *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (c.1688), set in Surinam, which explores the morality of slavery, is perhaps the earliest and best-known work in this genre.

Amongst writers already discussed in this thesis, the response to the plight of First Nation peoples was positive, even from the earliest phase covered. In *Roughing it in the Bush* Susanna Moodie devotes a chapter to the 'The Wilderness, and Our Indian Friends', but, strangely, the lengthy passage belonging to this particular chapter, which extols 'Indians', has been omitted from The New Canadian Library edition (1962).<sup>6</sup> Moodie tends to describe them in anthropological terms, or by drawing on the stereotype of the Noble Savage, but her admiration and affection for them is apparent. She refers to their "two God-like attributes", "honesty", and "love of truth", as well as their "great taste" and "innate politeness", and more than once in the course of the text she compares them highly favourably to white immigrants to Canada, who, she maintains, "in point of moral worth, are greatly [*their*] ...inferiors".<sup>7</sup> Most tellingly of all, however, Moodie, who will not eat with her servants, not only gives up her bed for an elderly squaw on one occasion, but is also content when her husband brings "the dark strangers" to eat with them at their own table.<sup>8</sup>

The concerns of other colonial women writers for black indigenes is also evident in their work. In Robin Hyde's writing this is most apparent in her journalism, but *The Godwits Fly* deplores the demise of Maori culture, and the exclusion of Maoris, "behind the doors of yesterday". Mrs. Aeneas Gunn's books, *We of the Never-Never* (1905) and *The Little Black Princess* (1908), show a genuine interest in Aboriginal lore and in the Aboriginal people living around the homestead, especially Bett-Bett the little princess, at a time when Aborigines were being openly persecuted. Katharine Susannah Prichard's novel, *Coonardoo* (1929), broke new ground in its delineation of the relationship between black and white cultures in Australia, because Prichard not only attempted to draw close to the consciousness of the female Aboriginal protagonist, Coonardoo, but she also figured black/white relations in terms of the love, unable to be acknowledged, between a white man and a black woman. As "the dark well in the shadows", Coonardoo represents the life force of Australia; significantly, the once potent wellspring of Aboriginal Australia is drying up, but, in the climate of spiritual aridity created by colonialism, Hugh, a farmer, sinks wells to combat the drought,

---

<sup>6</sup>Moodie, Susanna: *Roughing it in the Bush* (ed. Carl Klinck), McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1962.

<sup>7</sup>Moodie, Susanna: *Roughing it in the Bush*, Virago, London, 1986, p. 264, 268, 284, & 274; hereafter given as Moodie, *R.i.B.*, first published by Richard Bentley, London, 1852.

<sup>8</sup>Moodie, *R.i.B.*, p. 266.

apparently unable to tap into, or save, the dying Coonardoo's way of life.<sup>9</sup> In *Klee Wyck* (1941), Emily Carr mediates between native Canadian and white consciousnesses. Her sympathetic literary portrayal of Haida culture on the verge of demise under white male hegemony is reflected in her painting; it shows a once-powerful matriarchy where "womanhood was strong", where totem poles depict mothers holding babies, and where the awe-inspiring D'Sonoqua reigns in the indigenous imagination as the "wild woman of the woods", expressing "power, weight, domination, rather than ferocity" (figs. 5.1 and 5.2).<sup>10</sup>

One of the interesting aspects of colonial women's writing about race is the way in which some writers view indigenous women as a black reflection of the white female self; the black female is, in this figuration, a paradigm of femaleness, rather than femininity, and sometimes represents a state of being and belonging to which the white protagonist aspires. This is evident in Jean Rhys's works *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966).<sup>11</sup> In *Voyage in the Dark*, the protagonist, Anna Morgan, now in England, is haunted by a deep-seated wish from childhood to be black like Francine, her family's servant in the West Indies:

I wanted to be black. I always wanted to be black. ...Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad.<sup>12</sup>

Anna occupies a liminal state between black and white races, belonging to neither, as it is suggested that her antecedents, on her mother's side, are of mixed race. Surrounded, in London, by a multiplicity of scopophilic representations of womanhood, for example, Millais' *Cherry Ripe*, and preoccupied by definitions of white femininity, her disaffection with whiteness is matched by the disparity between what she wants to become and the images of herself she sees in the looking-glass, but which she is unable to fully recognize or acknowledge as her real self. Her exploitation at the hands of men, and subsequent descent into the world of prostitution, mirror the experience of the

<sup>9</sup>Prichard, Katharine Susannah: *Coonardoo*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1990, p. 2; first published as *Coonardoo (The Well in the Shadow)*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1929.

<sup>10</sup>Carr, Emily: *Klee Wyck*, Irwin Publishing Inc., Toronto, 1965, pp. 102 & 35; first published by Irwin Publishing Inc., Toronto, 1949.

<sup>11</sup>Rhys, Jean: *Voyage in the Dark*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969; first published by Constable, London, 1934; hereafter given as Rhys, *V.i.D.* Rhys, Jean: *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968; first published by André Deutsch, London, 1966; hereafter given as Rhys, *W.S.S.* I have included *Wide Sargasso Sea* as Rhys worked on it "during the 1950s and 1960s". (Olaussen, Maria: 'Jean Rhys's Construction of Blackness as Escape from White Femininity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*', in *Artel*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 1993, p. 65)

<sup>12</sup>Rhys, *V.i.D.*, p. 27.

shadowy "Maillotte Boyd, aged 18, mulatto, house servant", whose details she has come across on an old slave list, and upon whom the sins of white fathers have been visited.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Maillotte appears to be the character linking *Voyage in the Dark* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* through Rhys's portrayal of black womanliness as the state of being envied by white or mixed race women: in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Maillotte is Christophine's only friend, and it is her daughter, Tia, whom Antoinette sees as her black self:

As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass.<sup>14</sup>

Rhys's exploration of female identity and race encapsulates the sensitivities attendant upon discussions of race and gender. Although Anna and the young Antoinette both feel drawn, and even compelled, to identify with black femininity because white femininity represents an alien, socially-contrived state of being, they are unable to transcend racial barriers. Anna recognizes that Francine "disliked me ...because I was white; and that I would never be able to explain to her that I hated being white".<sup>15</sup> The catoptric episode, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in which Antoinette Mason is confronted with racial difference when she comes face-to-face with the stone-throwing Tia, "Like in a looking-glass", is echoed in the novel so that, by the close, it goes beyond surface illustration of racial antagonism to expose the broader discourse of race propagated at the metropolis, by transecting with Charlotte Brontë's portrayal of Bertha Mason Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (1847). The first episode in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which takes place when the family home, Coulibri, is burned by a black mob chanting "'the white niggers! ...the damn white niggers!'", therefore prefigures Antoinette/Bertha's confrontation with her self in a mirror in a dream sequence at the end of the same novel, and the fire that eventually engulfs Thornfield Hall. In the mirror, Antoinette/Bertha sees, "(t)he woman with streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her".<sup>16</sup> As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out, not only has Antoinette/Bertha been obliged to recognize her self as racialized other in a way in

<sup>13</sup>Rhys, *V.I.D.*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup>Rhys, *W.S.S.*, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup>Rhys, *V.I.D.*, p. 62.

<sup>16</sup>Rhys, *W.S.S.*, p. 154.

which she was unable to do in the confrontation with Tia, but she has also been unable to identify fully with Tia, her shadow self who was "the other that could not be selfed, because the fracture of imperialism ...intervened".<sup>17</sup>

Spivak's critique of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Jane Eyre*, and imperialism draws attention to the fact that in *Jane Eyre*'s story, Bertha becomes the sacrificial other, brought to the metropolis to die so that Jane "can become the feminist individualist of British fiction".<sup>18</sup> Thus, Bertha becomes the double victim of imperialism: in the first place she is the female indigene who is sexually exploited and then locked away by Rochester; secondly, however, she is characterized according to a racial stereotype which is exploited by Charlotte Brontë in order to position the white female protagonist as victorious within the male/female dialectic, at the expense of her black counterpart. This foregrounds the problems, which I discuss in the remainder of this chapter, which were encountered by colonial women in espousing indigenous rights and writing about race and gender in fiction in the face of imperial feminism. On the one hand they risked collapsing into the stereotypical representations of hegemonic discourse in which the female indigene is demonized as other; on the other hand, however, by following the imperial feminist line and claiming that they were 'speaking for' the indigenous woman, they also ran the risk of positioning and exploiting her as marginalized, silent victim, wholly dependent upon white patronage.

### **The Female Body Politic: Black and White Inscriptions**

Discussions about colonial women writers' approaches to racial issues are unavoidably complex. In recent years, literary critics, feminists, and other cultural commentators alike, have drawn attention to the difficulties in defining the asymmetric relationship between black women and white women during both the colonial and postcolonial periods. This also problematizes the representation of black women by white women writers. In 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak neatly illustrates these difficulties. The essay elucidates the silencing of the subaltern vis-à-vis the discourse of imperio-colonial hegemony, and her statement "(i)f, in the context of

<sup>17</sup>Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty: 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', in (eds.) Catherine Belsey & Jane Moore: *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1989, p. 184; first published in *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 1985.

<sup>18</sup>Spivak, 1989, pp. 184-185.

colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow...”, facilitates an understanding of the double displacement of indigenous women through colonialism and through indigenous patriarchal systems. However, Spivak’s own situation, as ‘speaker’, is tenuous. Her valuable point that it is impossible for the voices of female subalterns ever to be retrieved unless they are released to speak for themselves, also draws attention to a central paradox of postcolonial literatures, for both she, and all other commentators, whether they be representatives of the Western academy or reliable “native informants”, appear themselves to be confined to indefinite silence lest they incur the charge of committing the “epistemic violence” for which Western discourse is censured. Her argument can ultimately be seen as self-limiting, therefore, because it suggests that interventions to release indigenous voices, especially the doubly suppressed voices of female indigenes, are always open to accusations of hegemonic appropriation.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, the women’s movement has been accused of using the colonized other in order to assist the construction of the white female self. Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar have coined the term “imperial feminism” to describe racialized white feminism:

There is little recognition in the women’s movement of the ways in which the gains made by white women have been and still are at the expense of Black women. ...The ‘herstory’ which white women use to trace the roots of women’s oppression or to justify some form of political practice is an imperial history rooted in the prejudices of colonial and neo-colonial periods, a ‘herstory’ which suffers the same form of historical amnesia of white male historians, by ignoring the fundamental ways in which white women have benefitted from the oppression of Black people.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, both Ruth Frankenberg and Antoinette Burton maintain that white women use racial hierarchies in order to position themselves within society and it is significant that Frankenberg’s examination of the relationships between contemporary black and white women in America also highlights the influence of historico-imperialist discourse on present-day constructions of race:

white women’s senses of self, other, identity, and world view are also racialized, for they emerged here as repositories of the key elements of the history of the idea of race,

---

<sup>19</sup>Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty: ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in (eds.) Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin: *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp. 28, 24, & 26; first published in (eds.) Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg: *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan, London, 1988.

<sup>20</sup>Amos, Valerie and Pratibha Parmar: ‘Challenging Imperial Feminism’, in *Feminist Review*, No. 17, July 1984, p. 5.

in the U.S. and beyond, ... (and) draw consciously and unconsciously on moments in the racial order long past in material terms.<sup>21</sup>

According to Burton, elements within the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century British feminist movement adopted the imperial project as “a framework out of which feminist ideologies operated and through which the women’s movement articulated many of its assumptions”.<sup>22</sup> She argues convincingly that this undertaking was also racialized, and that British feminists assumed a white woman’s ‘burden’ by developing causes in relation to Indian women, in particular, for it was believed that by functioning successfully in an imperial role, the British women’s movement would prove British womanhood worthy of being granted full citizenship rights. Not only was it hoped that by representing the issues that related to Indian women, namely child marriage, zenana education, *sati*, and the Infectious Diseases Acts in India, that British feminists would advance the position of their Indian ‘sisters’, but also that by adopting women’s issues the feminist cause would be construed in a beneficial light which might then counter contemporaneous critiques lambasting feminism as monstrous and unfeminine.<sup>23</sup> British feminist philanthropy in the imperial sphere was seen as a latter-day extension of the anti-slavery campaigns which had achieved such success in the early part of the nineteenth century, and drew on a rhetoric foregrounding the high moral influence of British women and proclaiming their civilizing mission.

Moreover, the imperial feminist campaigns of the women’s movement were characterized by, and predicated upon, expressions of international sisterhood. According to Burton, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “Professions of sympathy and protectiveness were, together, at the heart of British feminist attitudes toward Indian women and formed the basis for what many British feminists considered

<sup>21</sup>Frankenberg, Ruth: *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, Routledge, New York, 1993, pp. 239-40.

<sup>22</sup>Burton, Antoinette: *Burdens of History*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1994, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup>In nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century texts, the word for the practice of widow immolation is commonly given as ‘suttee’. Unless quoting directly from such works, I adhere to current practice, giving the word as ‘*sati*’. ‘Suttee’ is defined as “(t)he rite of widow-burning; i.e. the burning of the living widow along with the corpse of her husband ... The word is properly Sanskrit *sati*, ‘a good woman’, ‘a true wife’, and thence specially applied ... to the wife who was considered to accomplish the supreme act of fidelity by sacrificing herself on the funeral pyre of her husband”. Yule, Henry, & A.C. Burnell: *Hobson-Jobson: The Anglo-Indian Dictionary*, Wordsworth Editions, Ware, 1996; first published by J. Murray, London, 1886.

to be the international sisterhood of the women's movement".<sup>24</sup> It is important to note, however, that, as Burton stresses, "many feminists who never left the British Isles collaborated in the imperial project", and that "most British feminist women interested in India never went there, at least not before World War I".<sup>25</sup>

Throughout this thesis I have been arguing for the existence of a cohesive colonial women's literary corpus which demonstrates many of the anti-imperialist attributes of postcolonial literatures. Another interesting aspect emerging from my research into the colonial literature of the period corresponding to Burton's study is that the British 'imperial feminist' discourse, described by Burton as projecting stereotypes of Indian women as sexually enslaved, as superstitious, ignorant, or lagging behind educationally, and as being medically deprived, was challenged by some of the most influential colonial women writers writing about India at that time.<sup>26</sup> Flora Annie Steel, Sara Jeannette Duncan, and Maud Diver, whose works I discuss in this chapter, all wrote from actual experience of the country, having spent a considerable portion of their lives living there.<sup>27</sup> Their books bear striking thematic similarities to one another and engage with themes now identified as being characteristic of so-called 'marginal' literatures, such as black and white feminist writing and postcolonial literatures, by decentring white male experience and privileging minority experience, especially that of black and white females.

---

<sup>24</sup>Burton, Antoinette: 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and "Global Sisterhood," 1900-1915', in *The Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Fall, 1991, p. 47. According to Amos and Parmar, assumptions of international sisterhood persist in contemporary feminism: "The women's movement has unquestioningly been premised on a celebration of 'sisterhood' with its implicit assumption that women qua women have a necessary basis for unity and solidarity; a sentiment reflected in academic feminist writings which is influenced by the women's movement and incorporates some of its assumptions". Amos & Parmar, 1984, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup>Burton, 1994, pp. 20 & 27.

<sup>26</sup>Burton outlines the production of the stereotypes of Indian womanhood in her book, *Burdens of History* (1994), in 'The Feminist Quest for Identity' (1991), and in 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and 'The Indian Woman,' 1865-1915', in (eds.) Chaudhuri, Nupur, & Margaret Strobel: *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992, pp. 137-157.

<sup>27</sup>Flora Annie Steel (1847-1929) first travelled to India as a bride in 1867 and left in 1889, only to return in 1894 to research *On the Face of the Waters* (1896); Sara Jeannette Duncan (1861-1922) met her future husband in India whilst on a world tour (1888-9) and, having returned to marry him eighteen months later, remained in India for the next twenty-five years; Maud Diver (1867-1945) was born in India, and, after being educated in England, returned to her country of birth where she married and spent her first few years of married life.



Steel, Duncan, Diver, and their female fellows in the Anglo-Indian community were not alone in writing about race. Elsewhere in the world, indeed, throughout the empire, colonial women wrote about the lives of indigenous women, and mostly in empathic terms. Yet the conflict between what Anglo-Indian women writers wrote and the substance of the well-documented British feminist focus on India and on Indian women raises a number of questions: why were India, and Indian women, of such particular interest to British feminists? why did they not espouse the cause of, for instance, Australian Aboriginal women? just how *did* colonial women see themselves in relation to indigenous women? did attitudes differ according to time and place? and, most importantly in the context of this thesis, and how did colonial women writers seek to counter racial prejudice and racial stereotyping fostered at home and overseas by muscular imperialism and 'imperial feminism'?

The answers to some of these questions are located within a discourse of racism which evolved in the Anglo-Celtic collective consciousness from the eighteenth century onwards. Predicated upon scientific thought, and in a vestigial belief in the Great Chain of Being which retained some significance in the minds of Western intellectuals throughout the Enlightenment and well into the nineteenth century, Victorian racism was not only hierarchical, being concerned with the strict classification and stratification of the human species, but it was beset with images of black alterity and barbarism propagated by historico-imperialist discourse and by the popular culture of the time. Despite the distinctly ethnocentric bias of a dialectic which attempted to categorize other races against white norms, the resultant discourse claimed to be based on scientific reason and logic. It was, however, haunted by psychic fears of the unknown and unknowable racialized other, perceived by some to be the very heart of darkness itself.

The history of scientific racism has been documented in individual studies by Christine Bolt and Douglas Lorimer, both of whom show that, from the late eighteenth century onwards, debate focused upon preoccupations about racial origin, and that until the 1860s this alternated between theories of monogenesis and polygenesis.<sup>28</sup> During the

<sup>28</sup>Bolt, Christine: *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, especially Chapter I, 'The Scientific View'; Lorimer, Douglas A.: *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, Leicester University  
Continued on next page...

early nineteenth century, societies concerned with discussing the nature of race, such as the Aborigines Protection Society (1837), its offshoot the English Ethnological Society (1843), and the London Anthropological Society (1863), proliferated, thus indicating a growing awareness of other cultures which paralleled the growth of empire. Insistent upon the hierarchical classification of race, scientific reason posited white races as the norm against which all other races were measured. Measurements were literal as well as figurative, cultural as well as scientific or pseudoscientific, with classification being attempted by various means, such as philology, or measurement of cranial capacity, and, although the findings were often spurious, they were adopted as scientific proof of white superiority.<sup>29</sup>

The monogenist/polygenist debate ceased only in the 1860s when Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection gained currency.<sup>30</sup> Despite the fact that, like those of polygenists, Darwin's theories run counter to the Biblical story of the creation, they found favour with many, including scientists, cultural commentators, and Christian proselytizers, as they "provided an analogy for both man's cultural as well as his physical development" and afforded comparison between "the evolutionary stages of human development and the growth of the individual from infancy to maturity".<sup>31</sup> In other words, they permitted race to be conceptualized as a series of types which were progressively evolved, and resulted in comparisons of some peoples as primitive against others deemed to be more developed or advanced. Significantly, in the context of my discussion about the intersection of the discourses of race, gender, class, Darwin's theories provided Victorian society with a ready rationale reinforcing white male paternalism at home and overseas, for they not only vindicated the existence of the British class system with its residuum, and the subjection of races perceived to be 'inferior' to the perpetual rule and guardianship of whites, but his theory of the survival

---

<sup>28</sup>Continued from previous page...

Press, Leicester, 1978, especially Chapter 7, 'Scientific Racism and Mid-Victorian Attitudes'; Lorimer, Douglas A.: 'Race, science and culture: historical continuities and discontinuities, 1850-1914', in (ed.) Shearer West: *The Victorians and Race*, Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1996, pp. 12-33.

<sup>29</sup>For example, comparisons of cross-racial cranial measurement were, according to Christine Bolt, "thought to prove that Negroes had smaller cranial capacity than Caucasians". (Bolt, 1971, p. 15)

<sup>30</sup>Charles Darwin (1809-82), naturalist; best remembered for his epoch-making work, *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection* (1859), and *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), he was not alone in propounding the theory of natural selection, but was the first to gain wide acceptance for the concept.

<sup>31</sup>Lorimer, 1978, pp. 145-6 & 148.

of the fittest also appeared to confirm white superiority and black inferiority by explaining the rapid demise of indigenous peoples who succumbed to diseases spread by white colonialism in countries such as Canada and Australia. Race, therefore, continued to be conceptualized by the scientific community as being stratified, with white races being ranked at the summit of the world order.

However, the Victorian discourse of racism was not posited on scientific rhetoric alone. The critical comparative gaze which was levelled at non-white peoples to generate global hierarchies of race also drew on cultural stereotypes linked to the Victorian ideology of self-help and to the related impulse for upward mobility and gentlemanly status. Racial consciousness was, therefore, inextricably linked with class consciousness and the work ethic. In Britain, economic failure in the West Indies during the 1850s and 1860s was ascribed to black indolence and ineptitude following the emancipation of British slaves. Thus even whilst the abolition of slavery in the United States was being sought by British philanthropists, counter-arguments undermined the plea for black autonomy, by stressing that black peoples were not equipped to take responsibility for themselves, and that conditions for factory workers in Britain should be addressed before confronting issues of human rights overseas.<sup>32</sup> The publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852, fuelled the debate, but, according to Douglas Lorimer, the book's enormous success in Britain led paradoxically to spin-offs in popular culture which resulted in changing "the philanthropic stereotype from an object of pity to a figure of fun" (fig. 5.3).<sup>33</sup>

The 'class ranking' of race according to degree of evolution, or civilization, also drew on misapprehensions about the cultures of non-whites. Significantly, this often related to the extent to which the work ethic of the group in question corresponded to the exploitative demands of colonizers for cheap labour. North American First Nation peoples, known to the Victorians as Indians, were despised as "barbarous and indolent"

---

<sup>32</sup>Abolition of slavery in the British empire was achieved in 1833, but only commenced in the United States in 1863; it was accomplished there in 1865.

<sup>33</sup>The craze for the novel led to a proliferation of stage productions based on the book, including black and white minstrel shows; 'Uncle Tom' memorabilia abounded, including almanacs, song books, wallpaper, and dolls. In particular, Lorimer draws attention to the way in which Topsy, became absorbed into popular culture as a figure of fun, as in the *Punch* cartoon of Disraeli, 'A Political Topsy'. (Lorimer, 1978, pp. 82-86; fig. 5.3, *Punch*, Vol. XXIII, July-Dec. 1852, p. 179)

for their nomadism; in contrast, Maoris were more highly regarded because they cultivated their land.<sup>34</sup> Evidence of antiquity was also regarded as a marker of a highly-evolved civilization. Yet the hegemonic production of racial stereotypes was highly selective. Despite the fact that the publication of Negro poet, Phillis Wheatley's work, in the eighteenth century, was seen as a turning point in the philanthropists' case for the abolition of slavery, because it was taken as proof that Africans were 'reasonable', or able to reason, African peoples were deemed inferior as it was claimed that they were devoid of a sense of history.<sup>35</sup> What was overlooked was the fact that African cultures were based on the skills of oracy rather than on those of literacy, and that most Africans in contact with white hegemony were denied access to white forms of education. Indeed, it appears that the rhetoric of racism even privileged stereotypes of barbarism or degeneracy. For example, although the discovery of the ruins of the Great Zimbabwe offered incontrovertible evidence of ancient African civilization, they were, instead, construed as proof of an earlier *white* civilization in Africa.<sup>36</sup>

The way in which stereotypes of barbarism were promulgated by nineteenth-century racist rhetoric about India, devolved from discursive strategies which utilized the bodies of black and white women for political ends. Prior to the outbreak of the Indian 'Mutiny' in 1857, white hegemony appeared to commend much about India and Indians. Unlike many other non-white societies presumed devoid of culture, India evidenced civilization through highly developed language systems, and ancient religions associated with literary canon, temples, and other artefacts, as well as a highly developed caste system. Even if, according to Victorian perceptions, Indians were not quite as Englishmen and women, the Indian caste system appeared to reflect both the English class system and English attitudes to race, with lighter skinned Indians being

<sup>34</sup>Bolt, 1971, p. 201.

<sup>35</sup>Phillis Wheatley (c. 1753-1784) was a Senegalese slave brought to N. America in 1760; her *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) made her the first African-American poet to be published; in 1772 she was required to attest publicly that she had written the poems herself. (Gates, Henry Louis: Editor's introduction, 'Writing "Race" and the Difference it Makes', in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn 1985, pp. 7-9)

<sup>36</sup>The discovery of the Great Zimbabwe provided inspiration for Rider Haggard's novel, *King Solomon's Mines* (1886). Karl Mauch's discovery of the ruins of Zimbabwe (1871) provoked the long-lasting theory that they were the ruins of King Solomon's Golden Ophir: "As late as the 1960s works published in Rhodesia and South Africa were still insisting that the builders of the ruins were non-African". (Brantlinger, Patrick: *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988, p. 195 & p. 292, n. 61)

ranked higher, and darker skinned Indians being ranked lower, within the caste hierarchy. Wilfred Scawen Blunt notes, in a chapter entitled 'Race Hatred', in a book about India, that during the early part of the nineteenth century relations between Indians and British were generally good, and intermarriage between English men and Indian women was not precluded:

The English official of that day ...did not disdain to make friends with those of the better class, and occasionally he married among them, or at least contracted semi-matrimonial relations with the women of the land.<sup>37</sup>

Blunt's comments illustrate the conflation of race and class in the Victorian mind; not only does he stress that class considerations overcame those of racial difference, but he goes on to explain that intermarriage "broke down the hedge of caste prejudice between East and West".

However, Blunt's words have a deeper significance, because they indicate the female body as a site of interaction or negotiation between East and West. As I intend to show, not only was patriarchal control of both black and white female bodies to become a major issue at the heart of British imperialist rhetoric in and about India, resulting in the production of damaging racial stereotypes, but black female bodies, in particular, were also to become the foci of the sorority promoting imperial feminism, and of their compatriots in India, the Anglo-Indian women writers whose work I discuss in this chapter. With this in mind I turn now to examine the emergence of the figure of the sexualized black female in imperialist rhetoric and the way in which this was utilized to promote stereotypes of Indian barbarism.

The tolerance with which India was regarded before the 'Mutiny' encompassed a view of the country as a vast treasure-house of great potential where, as in Africa, the black female body featured as one of the prizes of imperialism. Just as the conquest and exploration of Africa was embodied in gendered terms, both literally and figuratively, so was India feminized. As Edward Said has observed, this feminization of the East was a manifestation of Orientalism. However, the Orient was not, he argues, immediately intelligible, but "the relation between the Orientalist and the Orient was essentially hermeneutical", so that the Orientalist scholar is required to translate what is

---

<sup>37</sup>Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen: *Ideas about India*, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., London, 1885, p. 45.

seen, with much remaining obscure, at a distance beyond the understanding of the Occident:

This cultural, temporal, and geographic distance was expressed in metaphors of depth, secrecy, and sexual promise: phrases like “the veils of an Eastern bride” or “the inscrutable Orient” passed into the common language.<sup>38</sup>

The insistence on these metaphors of “depth, secrecy, and sexual promise” in Orientalist rhetoric not only results in the feminization of the Orient, but also reflects a preoccupation with the female indigene as a sexualized object. However, whereas Africa, and African women were subordinate, sexualized, open to display, and penetrable, as illustrated by Rider Haggard’s map, and as demonstrated by the scientific discussion and exhibitions relating to the Hottentot Venus, the veil which rendered India inscrutable also rendered Indian women impenetrable to the Occidental male gaze, except at a remove through the mediation of others.<sup>39</sup>

The absorption of metaphors of Orientalism into a rhetoric of British India which portrayed India as feminized and the figure of the Indian woman as sexualized, owes much to the speculations of travel writing and to the iconography of Orientalist art, for, despite the fact that in many areas Eastern women led secluded lives, they featured prominently in these media as the fascinating but shadowy objects of the Occidental male imagination. Illustrating this white male preoccupation with Eastern women and matters sexual, Indira Ghose draws attention to the urgent words of traveller and adventurer, Richard Burton, ““What are the women like?””. She continues with a list of notables who share his predilection:

In 1598 Thomas Dallam claimed to have caught a glimpse of the Turkish Sultan’s concubines playing ball in the royal gardens, and in the seventeenth century Sir George Courthope deftly conjured up a scene of royal sport in a pond in the same gardens ...Alexander Pope fantasized about eunuchs and even cucumbers only being served cut in the harem; Burton’s own account was both more drastic and more explicit. ...It was only with the posthumous publication of Lady Montagu’s Letters from Turkey in 1763

---

<sup>38</sup>Said, Edward: *Orientalism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1995, p. 222, first pub. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978.

<sup>39</sup>Scientific racism facilitated the construction of the Hottentot Venus as icon for black African female sexuality, a stereotype which became widely recognized; not only were the genitalia of Hottentot women, known as the Hottentot ‘apron’, the topic of prurient medical discussion, but the pronounced buttocks, or *steatopygia*, of some African women also excited attention, leading to the exhibition in Europe of Saartje Baartman as the Hottentot Venus in 1810; another ‘Hottentot Venus’ was exhibited at the Duchess Du Barry’s ball in Paris in 1829. (Gilman, Sander: ‘Black Bodies, White Bodies: Towards an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-century Art, Medicine, and Literature’, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn 1985, p. 213) Thackeray’s “unsettling” portrayal of Miss Swartz in *Vanity Fair* is also seen as a representation of the Hottentot Venus. (Brantlinger, 1988, p. 106)

that an eyewitness account of life in the harem was made available to readerships in the West.<sup>40</sup>

The scopophilic gaze of muscular imperialism is also mediated in Orientalist paintings of zenana life. Although the painter's view is, as Ghose remarks in the case of Thomas Daniell's *A Zenana Scene* (1804), "purely the product of his fantasy", the technique employed in this mediation is the same as that described by Laura Mulvey in her analysis of the structuring of the male gaze in twentieth-century narrative film; "the unconscious of patriarchal society" constructs the female figure as sexualized object by playing upon the "voyeuristic phantasy" of the male viewer.<sup>41</sup>

Orientalist paintings, such as those by Daniell, his nephew William Daniell, and by other Orientalist painters, therefore afford the Occidental observer glimpses of sensuously posed women, their appurtenances, and their surroundings, which were denied in real life by the rigorous seclusion of women in many regions, and construct Indian and other Eastern women, as icons of imperial male desire. *A Zenana Scene* (fig. 5.4) reveals a woman of rank, half-seated and half-reclining against cushions, and smoking a hookah, the tubing of which lies sinuously, and provocatively, across her left leg. Whereas the head of the nearby female attendant is covered, the central figure is defined as sexualized other by her loose hair and by the definition of her breasts, just visible through gauzy veiling. Both are contained within the exclusively female space of the zenana. In turn, this is figured as a deep and almost womb-like enclave by the red curtain framing the picture at top right and by screens visible between the pillars and arches in the background. *A Zenana Scene* exemplifies the recurring iconography in the genre: the hookah symbolizes Oriental decadence and abandon to narcotic pleasure; zenanas are portrayed as lying deep within layers of protectiveness and seclusion, within innermost courtyards and beyond screens and curtains; likewise, female inhabitants are veiled or partially veiled, recalling that veils, and especially wedding veils, represent the hymen and patriarchal control of female sexuality; ornate jewellery also features, denoting exoticism and symbolizing the power of the individual male protector or provider, as well as woman's correlative enslavement to that power.

---

<sup>40</sup>Ghose, Indira: *The Power of the Female Gaze: Women Travellers in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p. 52.

<sup>41</sup>Ghose, 1998, p. 52. Mulvey, Laura: 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in (ed.) Constance Penley: *Feminism and Film Theory*, Routledge, London, 1988, pp. 57 & 60.

Thomas Daniell's *The Nautch* (1810; fig. 5.5) depicts three dancing girls, watched by a noble patron smoking a hookah. William Daniell's *The Favourite of the Harem* (1829; fig. 5.6) shows the 'favourite', hookah in hand, and caparisoned in figure-revealing veils and ornate jewellery, being waited upon by attendants and fellow concubines, her dominant position to the fore of the others establishing the precedence within the harem. Two paintings by John Frederick Lewis, both entitled *The Hhareem*, and dated 1849 and *circa* 1850 respectively, also penetrate the veils of Oriental mystique to portray woman as an exchange commodity within the Orient (figs. 5.7 and 5.8). In the first, the eunuch displays an Abyssinian slave being offered for sale to the Turkish bey seated to the left of the picture. The presence of the two gazelles, symbols of innocence, hints at the fate of the new concubine: one stands beside her, emblemizing her virginity, its stance suggesting a natural timidity; the other has been tamed and is clearly accustomed to its place as a household pet alongside the bey on the couch. The second painting, which omits the figures of the Abyssinian slave and the eunuch, focuses more on the dynamics of the bey's family group: the bey's three wives are depicted as being wary, and almost jealous of the newcomer, and the intensity of the bey's gaze makes the painting a study of male desire, thus mirroring for the Occidental male viewer the scopophilic experience of the bey.

In Orientalist paintings, therefore, the figure of the indigenous woman comes to represent muscular imperialist desire and power. Not only is she mediated as sexualized object, and therefore constructed as one of the spoils of empire, but also she is utilized as a tropological figure in imperialist discourse, as a means of subjugating the male population. The female space of the *zenana*, and all that it implies to the Occident in the way of enslavement, multiple marriage, child marriage, and *sati*, becomes the focus of imperialist organizing intentions within the rhetoric of British India. As a result, the body of Indian woman itself is transformed into a key signifier of imperialist control over Indian men because the exertion of British fiscal and sexual power over Indian women served to emasculate Indian patriarchal hegemony, and, by purporting to liberate Indian women from the presumed constraints of Indian patriarchy, namely the sexual bondage implied by the *zenana*, the psycho-sexual impulse for control over the indigenous other is satisfied, whilst paying lip service to philanthropic demands.



An early manifestation of this is the debate surrounding imperial legislation to outlaw the practice of *sati* (1827). Commenting on the production of an official discourse of *sati* in India, Lata Mani maintains that re-examination of religious statutes by pundits under the orders of the imperial power revealed no secure theological basis for the practice. As a result, she argues, the bodies of Indian women became the site of negotiation between East and West because they were figured as “emblematic of tradition, and the reworking of tradition is largely conducted through debating the rights and status of women in society”.<sup>42</sup> Mani stresses that the rhetoric of officialdom reveals preoccupations with modernization and the control of Indian tradition itself, rather than with the protection of the women:

Rather than arguing for the outlawing of *sati* as a cruel and barbarous act, as one might expect of a true ‘moderniser’, officials in favour of abolition were at pains to illustrate that such a move was entirely consonant with the principle of upgrading indigenous tradition.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, she claims, “tradition is reconstituted under colonial rule and, in different ways, women and brahmanical scripture become interlocking grounds for this rearticulation”; in other words, under colonial rule, the official discourse of *sati* utilizes Indian women as the vehicles of moves to augment and consolidate imperial hegemony.<sup>44</sup> It is this discourse, based upon the tropology of the zenana and of the Eastern woman as victim, which imperial feminism subsequently adopted in an attempt to wrest power from white men.<sup>45</sup>

It is crucial to my argument that, just as British imperialist rhetoric deployed the bodies of Indian women as a tropological means of exerting control, so it also utilized the bodies of white women to generate a discourse foregrounding the ‘barbarity’ of Indian men. These parallel discursive strategies not only served to foster the sense of

---

<sup>42</sup>Mani, Lata: ‘Contentious Traditions: The Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India’, in (eds.) Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid: *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, p. 90.

<sup>43</sup>Mani, Lata: ‘The Production of an Official Discourse on *Sati* in Early Nineteenth-century Bengal’, in (eds.) Francis Barker et al: *Europe and Its Others: Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, Vol. I*, University of Essex Press, Colchester, 1985, p. 107.

<sup>44</sup>Mani, 1989, p. 90.

<sup>45</sup>The issue of *sati* initiated the first approach to the British parliament by female petitioners in 1829: “Presented one year before women’s first mass petitions for the abolition of colonial slavery, the *sati* petitions arguably set a precedent for female intervention in colonial policy-making on behalf of colonized women, and were the forerunner of feminist interventions in the condition of Indian women in the period from 1865 onward”. (Midgley, Clare: ‘Anti-slavery and the roots of “imperial feminism”’, in (ed.) Midgley, Clare: *Gender and Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998, p. 175)

international sisterhood felt by imperial feminists, but also provided a focus for Anglo-Indian women writers. Jenny Sharpe maintains that, prior to the Indian 'Mutiny', stories of the rape of white women by Indian men were not in circulation, but the fact that these proliferated during and following the uprisings of 1857-8 reveals that rape is a "highly charged trope that is implicated in the management of rebellion".<sup>46</sup> The stories centring around "'Sepoy atrocities'" gathered potency as the discourse of history interacted with popular culture; Nana Sahib, perceived as leader, was demonized, and the stories based on events at Cawnpore, in particular, where white women and children were imprisoned in the Bibighar prior to their slaughter, and the disposal of their bodies in the well, later designated a shrine to their memory, provided the focus for "racial memory".<sup>47</sup> As Indira Ghose explains, white women stood as trope for the imperial infrastructure and the rape myth, which reflected a perceived "attack on the colonial body politic ...recoded into an attack on British women's bodies", was "deployed in the service of colonial punitive measures and gained authoritative status in colonial historiography".<sup>48</sup> Therefore, just as imperialist rhetoric inscribes black women as victims, so white women are also stereotyped as victims; in both cases this results in the stigmatization of black men as barbarous in order to emasculate and control indigenous populations and to justify imperial repression and reprisals.

The absorption of the figure of the Indian woman into imperialist rhetoric therefore coincides with the way in which the figure of the white woman is also absorbed, and the process can be traced in *Punch* artwork contemporaneous with the 'Mutiny'. 'The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger' (fig. 5.9) shows Britain, represented by a male lion with bared teeth, attacking India, depicted as a snarling tiger crouched possessively over its prey, the body of white female in whose arms lies the small form of a white baby.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, the top half of the female body is naked, thereby coding the 'tiger's' attack as sexual, whilst the inclusion of the baby spells out the true

---

<sup>46</sup>Sharpe, Jenny: *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup>Sharpe, 1993, p. 85; "By the turn of the century Nana Sahib, Satanic locus of all oriental treachery, lust, and murder, was one of the most familiar villains in novels and melodramas, and by far the most familiar Indian character. His evil visage peers out of countless texts, the miragelike product of the projective mechanisms by which Victorians displaced their repressed sexual desire and guilt for imperial domination onto the dark places of the earth." (Brantlinger, 1988, pp. 204-5)

<sup>48</sup>Ghose, 1998, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup>'The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger', *Punch*, August 22, 1857, pp. 76-77.

role of British womanhood in the discourse of British imperialism, namely, the perpetuation of the British race, and the concomitant guardianship of racial purity. The subtext of the image reinforces white male possessiveness and the belief that white women's bodies exist solely in order to fulfil the sexual demands of muscular imperialism.

Exactly a week later, this message is reinforced by its repetition in a related illustration, 'Willing Hands for India' (fig. 5.10).<sup>50</sup> Here, the image is reproduced in its entirety on a flag wielded by a British soldier recruiting support for reprisals at the head of a motley, but enthusiastic, assemblage of fighting men, armed with an array of implements which identify them as a cross-section of British manhood, and brandishing banners emblazoned with the word "India". A fortnight later still, British womanhood is transmogrified from the status of victim to that of avenging angel in the stern-faced, female figure of 'Justice' (fig. 5.11).<sup>51</sup> Not only is the righteousness of revenge upheld by the inclusion of the scales of justice on the shield she bears, but her stance as her right foot and forceful sword blows crush Indian soldiery before her, also protects Indian womanhood to her rear under the symbolic cover of the shield. The illustration, therefore, shows the elision of two imperialist tropes: the Indian-woman-as-victim is protected from Indian patriarchy by British justice; at the same time, acts of reprisal against Indian men are validated, as they are shown to be enacted both in the name of justice and in the name of British womanhood.

The use of the figure of the white woman in imperialist discourse was ambiguous, however, because although she was cast as victim following events at Cawnpore, she was also cast as the scapegoat: the stereotype of the white woman in India, or *memsahib*, was inscribed by popular culture at 'home' and abroad as authoritarian and unpopular. Writing in 1885, Wilfred Scawen Blunt ascribes blame for the breakdown in good relations between British and Indians to 'English' women:

I shall no doubt incur anger by saying it, but it is a fact that the Englishwoman in India during the last thirty years has been the cause of half the bitter feelings there between race and race. It was her presence at Cawnpore and Lucknow that pointed the sword of revenge after the Mutiny, and it is her constantly increasing influence now that widens

---

<sup>50</sup>'Willing Hands for India', *Punch*, August 29, 1857, pp. 88-9.

<sup>51</sup>*Justice*, *Punch*, September 12, 1857, p. 109.

the gulf of ill-feeling and makes amalgamation daily more impossible.<sup>52</sup> His "sword of revenge" imagery is an uncanny reflection of that in the *Punch* drawing, 'Justice', some thirty years earlier, and confirms that the figure of white womanhood was a discursive strategy deployed in order to exact racial retribution.

The stereotypical *memsahib* features prominently in Rudyard Kipling's work as a manipulative married woman, domineering towards men, who enjoys the social attentions of the ubiquitous "*cavalier servente*", or attentive male admirer, usually a young bachelor.<sup>53</sup> Whilst the most famous of his female characters in this mould, Mrs Hauksbee, is described variously as being "honestly mischievous", "the greatest woman on earth", or "the most wonderful woman in India", and as being endowed with almost superhuman attributes such as "the wisdom of the Serpent, the logical coherence of the Man, the fearlessness of the Child, and the triple intuition of the Woman", his portrayal of the *memsahib* is ambivalent and undercut with irony.<sup>54</sup> Mrs. Hauksbee's rival and *alter ego*, Mrs. Reiver, represents the darker side of the *memsahib* stereotype as she is "wicked in a business-like way".<sup>55</sup>

On the one hand, therefore, the formidable combination of talents assembled in the *memsahib* can, according to Kipling's narrator, be inspirational to the white man in India, because "you can watch men being driven by the women who govern them, out of the rank-and-file and sent to take up points alone".<sup>56</sup> As a result, the regime conducted by white women appears to resemble the "benevolent despotism" of British rule.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, however, if misused, these same talents lead to varying degrees of misery; Pluffles learns to "fetch and carry like a dog, and to wait like one, too" under Mrs Reiver's tyranny; more seriously, in 'Watches of the Night' the Colonel's Wife is described as being of the "worst" type as she "broke up the Laplaces' home", "stopped the Ferris-Haughtrey engagement", and "induced young Buxton to keep his wife down in the Plains through the first year of the marriage. Wherefore little

<sup>52</sup>Blunt, 1885, p. 47.

<sup>53</sup>Kipling, Rudyard: 'On the Strength of a Likeness', *Plain Tales from the Hills*, Macmillan, London, 1965, p. 306, Kipling's short stories from *Plain Tales from the Hills* given hereafter by name as Kipling, '---', *P.T.*

<sup>54</sup>Kipling, 'The Rescue of Pluffles', *P.T.*, p. 55; 'Consequences', *P.T.*, p. 104; 'Kidnapped', *P.T.*, pp. 132-3

<sup>55</sup>Kipling, 'The Rescue of Pluffles', *P.T.*, p. 55.

<sup>56</sup>Kipling, 'Wressley of the Foreign Office', *P.T.*, p. 315.

<sup>57</sup>Kipling, 'Consequences', *P.T.*, p. 102.

Mrs Buxton died, and the baby with her".<sup>58</sup> Kipling's portrayals of the *memsahib*, therefore, show her not only as a force to be reckoned with, but as one that is potentially malign.

Along with the promulgation of views about British women in India such as Blunt's, the popularity of Kipling's work ensured that the figure of the *memsahib*, like the figure of the Indian woman, became indelibly inscribed in imperialist discourse. An article by Hester Gray which appeared in *The Common Cause*, draws attention to the perceived difference between imperial feminists and Anglo-Indian women by maintaining that, in India, there were "two classes of English women, one living in comfort and ease, attended by many servants, the mem-sahibs; the other obviously spending laborious days simply dressed and simply housed, the teachers". Gray exhorts British women to contribute to the work of empire by sharing "the white man's burden" and becoming teachers, as there is "a demand for women, other than missionaries" to work in India. This, she explains, is because "progressive sects keenly desire education for their women, but fear the influence of missionaries more for their girls than for their boys", and because Indian female teachers are not "*persona grata*" to "high-born" castes, nor are they fitted to do "pioneer, original work". She concludes with a rallying cry, typical of imperial feminist rhetoric, which emphasizes the need of Indian women for intervention by their Occidental 'sisters' whilst also claiming that the enfranchisement of British women will benefit the empire:

For the next ten or twenty years India could do with any number of the very ablest and most competent women that the feminist movement has put forth. It is another reason for desiring the swift coming of the Suffrage. Only the passing of an Enfranchising Bill will release for action in the distant places of the Empire, the kind of public servant so urgently needed, so justly demanded by the less privileged women of the East.<sup>59</sup>

#### Passages from India:

##### Maud Diver, Flora Annie Steel, and Sara Jeannette Duncan

Against the background of a discourse of empire proclaimed by muscular imperialism and imperial feminism, in which stereotypes of race and gender were inextricably intertwined, some white women writers undertook to dismantle the rhetoric and tropes of muscular imperialism to reconstruct the figures of the black woman and her white

<sup>58</sup>Kipling, 'The Rescue of Pluffles', *P.T.*, p. 56; 'Watches of the Night', *P.T.*, p. 86.

<sup>59</sup>Gray, Hester: 'The White Woman's Burden', in *The Common Cause*, 27 November, 1914, pp. 565-6.

'sister', the *memsahib*, with varying degrees of success. One book that is less successful, perhaps because it is polemic, Maud Diver's *The Englishwoman in India* (1909), is nonetheless noteworthy for the way in which it foregrounds international sisterhood by including Indian women as honorary 'Englishwomen', and for the way that her "honest attempt" to confute the *memsahib* stereotype continually collapses into imperial feminist rhetoric.<sup>60</sup> Despite its ethnocentric title, her dedication "To the unnumbered women, of all castes and creeds, who have lived and loved and worked in India" purports to preface a celebration of the achievements of both British and Indian women in equal measure. Part I examines the lives of British women in India, whilst Part II, 'Pioneer Women of India', discusses the work of Indian women, notable for their success in the fields of education, literature, and medicine, and for their role in attempting to further the emancipation of other Indian women.<sup>61</sup>

Yet Diver's attempts to restore the reputation of white womanhood are ridden with the colonial condescension of British imperial feminism and result in the partial eclipse of Indian womanhood, as her choice of epigraph shows:

What would India be without England, and what would the British Empire be without Englishwomen? To these women are due the gratitude not only of their country but of the civilised world. Fearlessly the woman of British birth looks into the eye of danger. Faithfully and with willing sacrifice she upholds the standard of the King-Emperor - the standard of culture and of service to humanity.<sup>62</sup>

By proclaiming the civilizing influence of British women as a means of strengthening the empire, Diver echoes a view actively promoted by imperial feminism. However, whereas many British feminists claim that work in India was a vocation, rather than an adjunct to marriage, and should be undertaken by a new breed of professional women, Diver appears to suggest that the *memsahib* contributes to the imperial project by her

---

<sup>60</sup>Diver, Maud: *The Englishwoman in India*, Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1909; hereafter given as Diver, *T.E.I.* Like Blunt, Diver confuses 'Britishness' and 'Englishness'. Portions of the book had been serialized in a woman's magazine; she justifies them as "an honest attempt to make the Anglo Indian woman's life better understood at Home; and many Anglo Indians were grateful to me for writing them"; they deal "with the varied aspects of the Englishwoman's life in India, the workers as well as the idlers". (Blackwood Archive, National Library of Scotland: 19.9.1908/30127; 25.10.1908/30135; 3.10.1908/30135)

<sup>61</sup>The six 'Pioneer' Indian women in *T.E.I.* are the poet, feminist, and politician Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), poet and translator Toru Dutt (1856-1877), educator and feminist Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (1858-1922), Dr. Anandabai Joshee, The Maharani Sunita Devi of Kuch Behar, and lawyer Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954). Sorabji complained about her inclusion in *The Englishwoman in India*, in a "charming and rather pathetic letter" to Diver. (Blackwood Archive: 9.1.1910/30149)

<sup>62</sup>Epigraph taken from Count von Königsmark: *Die Engländer in Indien*.

very presence alongside her husband.<sup>63</sup> Her praise for 'Englishwomen' is also fraught with discursive tensions and reads like an apologia. She opens with obeisance to Kipling's representations of "Anglo-Indian woman ...sketched ...for us with inimitable skill and truth", but follows with the claim that "India's heroines and martyrs far outnumber her social sinners".<sup>64</sup> In language saturated with the racial stereotypes of imperialism she performs one *volte face* after another as she excuses the peccadilloes of white womanhood; on the one hand she maintains that there is little to occupy the *memsahib* because "(s)ave for arranging a wealth of cut flowers, laid to her hand by the faithful *mali*, an Anglo-Indian girl's domestic duties are practically *nil*"; on the other hand, she acknowledges that few white women ever attempt to cross cultural boundaries, "the fact remains that only a small minority of Anglo-Indian women come directly into touch with the lives of their Aryan sisters".<sup>65</sup>

In contrast, Flora Annie Steel's novel, *On the Face of the Waters* (1896), is more successful in its examination of the figure of the Indian woman and that of the *memsahib*. It was published in the year prior to Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, and in writing it Steel, like Schreiner, was not only conscious of challenging imperialist rhetoric through the medium of fiction, but she was also intensely aware of the need to reflect the experience of women under imperialism. For Steel, the diversity of India and its races required to be expressed. On leaving the country for what she thought was the last time, she looked back on it from the deck of the ship and pondered that it "loomed homogeneous, and so looked a lie", whereas she believed it to be "as multitudinous as the sands of the sea".<sup>66</sup> The novel is based on her own meticulous research into the previously unopened archives of the Indian administration held in India, carried out on a return visit for this purpose, and upon her experiences living as an Indian woman both on the rooftops of a house in Kasur where

---

<sup>63</sup>Originally, missionaries' wives worked unpaid and unfunded, gleaning support where they could. The Society for the Propagation of Female Education in the East, founded in London (1834), supported missionary wives and recruited single women as teachers. When, in the 1860s, missionary women undertook zenana visitation to Christianize high caste homes, missionary wives became adjuncts to these professionals. (Haggis, Jane: 'White women and colonialism: towards a non-recuperative history', in Midgley, 1998, pp. 45-75)

<sup>64</sup>Diver, *T.E.I.*, p. 3; Diver's acknowledgement of Kipling is explained by her friendship with Kipling's sister, Mrs. Fleming. (Blackwood Archive: 25.10.1908/30135 & 9.1.1910/30149) Diver, *T.E.I.*, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup>Diver, *T.E.I.*, p. 81.

<sup>66</sup>Steel, Flora Annie: *The Garden of Fidelity: The Autobiography of Flora Annie Steel, 1847-1929*, Macmillan, London, 1929, p. 191; hereafter given as Steel, *T.G.F.*

she "steeped" herself "in the habits and thoughts of the common folk", and in Delhi where she learned the "court ways" of a big city. She claims it is accurate in every respect; "every incident might have happened", "I had not to alter one single thing in my projected story of the Mutiny; all, every incident, could have been inferred from what passed through my hands".<sup>67</sup>

*On the Face of the Waters* has long been acknowledged as a feminist text. Steel describes herself as a "vehement suffragette", and one contemporaneous female reviewer who praises the book, hailing it as "*the* novel of the Mutiny", even castigates it for its anachronistic feminism and for introducing "theories on the relation of the sexes in language borrowed from Scandinavia".<sup>68</sup> More recently, it has been charged with being aligned to the rhetoric of the imperial patriarchy. Although Jenny Sharpe concedes that the novel makes the important point that some English women did survive the 'Mutiny', she maintains that it suffers from an imperial feminist vision of India, arguing that Steel is more interested in redefining the gender role of British women by "finding a place for English women's agency in the racial memory of the Mutiny" than in redefining the gender role of Indian women.<sup>69</sup> It is, however, my belief that *On the Face of the Waters* deserves an alternative reading. Not only is it framed as much more critical of British rule in India than Sharpe acknowledges, but Steel's portrayal of Indian women also manifests an understanding of their subjectivity which attempts to dismantle patriarchal stereotyping.<sup>70</sup>

In the early chapters of *On the Face of the Waters*, the network of semiotic indicators established by Steel has the dual purpose of flagging to her readership the importance of reading with care her own contextual symbols, whilst also suggesting that the key to British failure in averting the 'Mutiny' was the inability, or unwillingness, to read cultural signs which would have enabled interracial understanding. She had good

<sup>67</sup>Steel, *T.G.F.*, pp. 215, 225, & 214.

<sup>68</sup>Steel, *T.G.F.*, p. 222; The anonymous reviewer, now known to be Hilda Caroline Gregg (1868-1933), continues: "...An ordinary Englishwoman of 1857, destitute of the advantages to be gained from a study of Ibsen and of Hill-top novelists, would have shrunk from such thoughts, even had they occurred to her, as a deadly sin". (Anon: 'The Indian Mutiny in Fiction', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1897, pp. 228-30; Brantlinger, 1988, p. 199)

<sup>69</sup>Sharpe, 1993, p. 88.

<sup>70</sup>Nancy L. Paxton argues that Steel shows "more than usual insight into and sympathy with the lives of her Indian characters", in *On the Face of the Waters*. (Paxton, Nancy L.: 'Complicity and Resistance in the Writings of Flora Annie Steel and Annie Besant', in Chaudhuri & Strobel, 1992, p. 163)



reason for taking a cautious approach to her rewriting of imperial history for although she had been given access to "certain confidential boxes of papers in Delhi", which had remained sealed since the 'Mutiny', this had been with the proviso that she maintained "discretion ..., judgement, ...(and) loyalty", a stipulation which she believed to be a "stifling confidence" binding her from open revelation of all the facts behind the rebellion.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, in the opening scenes of the novel against the backdrop of the auction of the deposed King of Oudh's menagerie in March 1856, the phrases "the English flag drooped lazily", and "one stroke of an English pen", code the British administration as indolent and as arrogantly casual of its responsibilities.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, the bidding between Major Erlton and the Moulvie for a talking cockatoo owned and prized by the latter for its ability to speak "(t)he war cry of the fiercest of all faiths", which was seized summarily by the British along with all of the king's property, symbolizes the struggle for power and possession in India, as well as British ignorance of Indian culture.<sup>73</sup> Erlton bids for the bird to impress Alice Gissing, but also to rebuke the Moulvie; however, the Britons are ignorant of the meaning of bird's cry, "'Deen! Deen! Futteh Mahomed'", and so are oblivious to its significance as an indicator of mounting Indian concern about Christian proselytizing.<sup>74</sup>

Other signs proliferate on both sides of the racial divide, yet despite the fact that the British administration claims to be searching for signs, and, according to one report "the whole of India is one vast sign post", even obvious evidence of unrest is ignored or overlooked, as the British appear ossified in assumptions of racial superiority.<sup>75</sup> The auctioneer's repetitive chant, "'Going! Going! Gone!'", is taken up in the streets and bazaars where it now suggests the imminent demise of British ascendancy. It becomes absorbed into the rumours and counter-rumours circulating around British intent so that

<sup>71</sup>Steel, *T.G.F.*, pp. 213-4.

<sup>72</sup>Steel, Flora Annie: *On the Face of the Waters*, Heinemann, London, 1897, p. 3; first published by Heinemann, London, 1896; hereafter given as Steel, *O.F.W.* Before the 'Mutiny', Indians at all levels of society held grudges against the British administration. The chief cause for complaint was the negation of Indian power through a "legal stratagem" enabling the Governor-general to acquire, between 1847 and 1856, territories including Satara, Sambalpur, the Punjab, Jhansi, and Nagpur. Amongst the deposed Indian kings, princes, and noblemen were Nana Sahib, later held responsible for the slaughter of British women and children at Cawnpore, and Wajid Ali Shah, ex-king of Awadh, or Oudh, removed in February 1856. Following the break-up of the latter's kingdom, featured in the opening pages of *On the Face of the Waters*, vast numbers of Indians were dispossessed. (James, Lawrence: *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, Abacus/Little, Brown & Co., London, 1997, pp. 233-4)

<sup>73</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 7.

<sup>74</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 7; Steel translates the cry, "For the Faith! For the Faith! Victory to Mahomed"

<sup>75</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 39.

the obdurate British blindness to cultural semiotics is expressed thus by an Indian, “the *Huzoors* would not listen, or they would not understand”. This contrasts markedly with the Indian desire to divine meaning from the signs:

What was going? Everything, if tales were true; and there were so many tales now-a-days. Of news flashed faster by wires than any, even the Gods themselves, could flash it; of carriages, fire-fed, bringing God knows what grain from God knows where! Could a body eat of it and not be polluted? Could the children read the school books and not be apostate?<sup>76</sup>

Indian rumour is, therefore, also transmitted through signs; a piece of bone is found in an empty sack and stories that commissariat flour has been deliberately adulterated with bone dust abound; the delivery amongst villages of *chupattis* accompanied by the message “From the South to the North. From the East to the West” echoes the passage of messages a generation before, and also stands as a sign to be readily decrypted by its recipients. Yet at all levels of Anglo-Indian society signs are ignored, from the piece of paper already inscribed with the “curves and dots” of Persian script seized from her Indian tailor by Kate Erlton, which is decipherable to him as “The Sword is the Key to Heaven” but which is meaningless to her, to the warning telegram received by the Commissioner the night before the first attack, but pocketed unopened.<sup>77</sup>

A reading from this standpoint not only indicates that Steel was critical of the British administration, but it also introduces a sense of British racial prejudice and initiates alternative ways of considering the dynamics of race which are shown to evolve between her characters in the course of the novel. According to Sharpe, Steel “explains the anticolonial uprisings in terms of a British failure to command authority and, for this reason, shows sympathy for loyal and obedient Indians alone”.<sup>78</sup> However, it is also possible to view the confrontation of racial issues as the fulcrum which succeeds in achieving a transformation in the British characters’ attitudes to race. The beginning of the novel shows the frivolous *femme fatale*, Alice Gissing, and the domestic paragon, Kate Erlton, as two halves comprising the *memsahib* stereotype. Alice, who has been married twice, and who is conducting an open affair with Kate’s husband, has used the death of her baby from her first marriage and her weekly visits to its grave as a means

<sup>76</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 10.

<sup>77</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, pp. 120, 21 & 196-7; Steel’s footnote reads, “a record of fatal mistakes gaining a pathetic probability”.

<sup>78</sup>Sharpe, 1993, p. 87.

of fostering the sympathy and attentions of "admirers whom she took in succession into her confidence".<sup>79</sup> When an Indian child is killed accidentally by a carriage driven by Major Erlton, in which she is travelling at the time, her response represents an extreme in racial prejudice, and confirms that the narrator's sympathies are clearly with Indians, whether loyal and obedient, or not:

"I suppose you will think it horrid ...but it doesn't feel to me like killing a human being, you know. I'm sorry, of course, but I should have been much sorrier if it had been a white baby."<sup>80</sup>

A few chapters later, when she dies at the hand of an Indian swordsman as she saves Sonny, the white child of a neighbour, from being killed, her act of selflessness might appear redemptive. Yet the drama is accompanied by the continual cries of the cockatoo which translate "For the Faith! For the Faith! Victory to Mahomed", and appear to be exhorting her killer. As a result, the episode recalls her earlier arrogance at the symbolic auction of India as well as her callousness at the death of the Indian child, and can therefore be read as divine retribution, and as the necessary demise of a type signifying racial division.

Sharpe's reading of the text as the retrieval of "English women's agency in the Mutiny narratives", and as the interrogation of their "presumed gender role", fails to engage with two salient points which emerge from the novel.<sup>81</sup> Firstly, the moral economy of the novel reveals Alice, and other British characters who die as a result of the 'Mutiny', such as Major Erlton, to be dispensable, having proved themselves unfit to govern. Secondly, although Sharpe does acknowledge that the survival of a British woman counters the trope of white women as victims at the well of Indian hatred, she overlooks the additional point that Kate's survival, and those of two other British characters central to the plot, Sonny, and Jim Douglas, are achieved not only because they are *worthy* survivors, but also because Steel gives Indian women practical and moral agency. Sharpe's focus on the "lesson in self-dependency" Kate undergoes and her subsequent rescue from "the domestic life that had previously stifled her", fails to note that what she terms "strategies in self-survival", are only acquired under the tutelage of Tara Devi, who teaches Kate how to live disguised as an Indian woman, and

---

<sup>79</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 53.

<sup>80</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 58.

<sup>81</sup>Sharpe, 1993, p. 97.

succeeds in showing her how to live.<sup>82</sup> On her return to the world of the Occident, Kate is able to say "I feel as if I had just been born", symbolizing a rebirth, or rite of passage into womanhood.<sup>83</sup>

Kate's subjectivity as an English woman is juxtaposed against an exploration of the subjectivity of indigenous women. Zora and Tara are coded as the archetypal female victims of Indian patriarchy; both have been rescued by a culturally ambiguous figure, Jim Douglas, whose alias, Jim Greyman, renders him half black and half white, and reflects his position on the fringes of both societies. Zora, now his mistress, had been "recruit kidnapped" into child prostitution, but has been saved from this by him some eight years prior to the action of the novel; he also prevented Tara, a child bride widowed at the age of sixteen, from committing *sati*.<sup>84</sup> Yet Steel's discussion of the figure of the Indian woman as victim suggests British intervention in India to be double-edged because the pair remain the victims of patriarchal infrastructures, both Indian and British, that exploit women; Zora, unable, in the terms of hegemonic discourse, to survive under the title of Indian mistress, dies from tuberculosis, and Tara's failure to become sanctified through the act of *sati* renders her a liminal figure, "outcaste utterly ... (s)ince none, not even other widows, would eat or drink with a woman rejected by the very gods on the threshold of Paradise".<sup>85</sup>

Despite the blight cast on Tara, in the early part of the novel she epitomizes the potential of the independent female indigene, prefiguring Jean Rhys's transgressive character, Christophine, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Unlike her quiet, patient, and uncomplaining 'sisters', Zora, the stereotypical sexualized female of Orientalism who remains an undeveloped character and fades away, and Kate, the English stereotype, Tara is tall, strong, vocal, and able to cross the boundaries of space and gender. Whereas Kate must disguise herself as an Indian woman, and must eventually return to her world of domesticity, Tara not only enters and leaves the world of men at will, moving freely around the besieged city disguised as her brother, Soma, but she also

---

<sup>82</sup>Sharpe, 1993, p. 88.

<sup>83</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 381.

<sup>84</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 27.

refuses to acknowledge gender as a restricting factor, stating “‘Soma or Tara, it matters not ... They were one in the beginning’”.<sup>86</sup>

As Steel shows, Tara's development is, however, stunted by patriarchal rhetoric, and her eventual degeneration into the madness that precipitates her death, anticipates Frantz Fanon's study of the incidence of mental illness under colonial hegemony. She inhabits a confused limbo existence as a non-person, trapped between the Eastern and Western discourses of *sati*:

Such a mental position is well-nigh incomprehensible to Western minds. It was confusing, even to Tara herself; and the mingling of conscious dignity and conscious degradation, gratitude, resentment, attraction, repulsion, made her a puzzle even to herself at times.<sup>87</sup>

As Fanon indicates, the denial of self enforced by colonial subjectivity precipitates crises of identity:

Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: ‘In reality, who am I?’<sup>88</sup>

In Tara's case, because she has been denied the virtuous status of *sati*, that of ‘true wife’, her only recourse is to end her living death as a widow and, paradoxically, reclaim her sense of self by entering into the self-destructive act of immolation. The failure of her second attempt, again because Greyman forestalls her, is followed by an act of divine intervention which ostensibly upholds her determination to defy British authority when “‘God sent fire on her way to the festival’”.<sup>89</sup> Her subsequent transfiguration into sainthood as one who has achieved the state of virtue, *sati*, by living through the sacrificial fire, permits her to claim, “‘I am suttee’”, a phrase which now becomes the insistent *leitmotif* of her story, showing through her use of the present tense that she has wrested a temporary sense of being from her survival. As a result she is paraded in holy processions, baring her scars to the world as stigmata testifying to her sanctity:

...behind it, with wide-spread arms to show her sacred scars, walked Tara. She was naked to the waist, and the scanty ochre-tinted cloth folded about her middle was raised so as to show the burns upon her lower limbs. The sunlight gleaming on its magnificent

---

<sup>86</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 378.

<sup>87</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 27.

<sup>88</sup>Fanon, Frantz: *The Wretched of the Earth* (translated by Constance Farrington), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1999, p. 200; first published as *Les damnés de la terre*, François Maspéro, France, 1961.

<sup>89</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 101.

bronze curves showed a seam or two upon her breast also.<sup>90</sup>

Tara's significance as a female icon of her culture foregrounds the parallels between her story and that of Kate. With Greyman's discovery that "the priests conducting the agitation against widow remarriage and the abolition of *suttee* were leagued with the Mohammedan revival", the exploitation of the discourse of *sati*, and, therefore, of Indian women, in order to provoke interracial confrontation is made manifest.<sup>91</sup> This is matched by the perpetuation of the British culture of revenge, a discourse which, like that of *sati*, is one in which female bodies are not only inscribed with guilt, but also as pawns in the possession of their male compatriots. As Greyman indicates, it is by levying, or invoking, the memories of Cawnpore that hatred is perpetuated:

"Is the crisis so desperate that we need levy the ladies? ...Personally I want to leave them out of the question as much as I can. It is their intrusion into it which has done the mischief. I don't want to minimise these horrors; but if we could forget those massacres ---"<sup>92</sup>

Just as Tara's disfigured body becomes iconic, so do the bodies of the Cawnpore victims. By exposing the rhetoric behind the figure of the indigenous woman as victim, Steel therefore counters the scopophilic gaze of Orientalism and pierces the veils of mystery to reveal the reality behind colonial policy. Tara, and other Indian women, bear the indelible stigmata of the patriarchal policies of the opposing sides, and are doomed to be paraded as holy relics in the war of words.

When, on the last pages of the novel Tara finally consummates her desire for *sati* by dying in flames on the roof of a burning house, she is not only possessed of "a mad exultation", but she is also of "unstable mind".<sup>93</sup> Sharpe reads the obvious parallels between Tara's death and that of Bertha in *Jane Eyre* as the "clearing of a new domestic space in each novel" which "requires the sacrifice of a colonial Other".<sup>94</sup> Whilst Brontë's plot does require the death of Bertha in order to allow Rochester to remarry and Jane to triumph, Greyman is not married to Tara, formally or informally. As a result, her death is not necessary to the romantic resolution of the plot which sees Greyman pairing with Kate, especially as at the time of her death she had already left

<sup>90</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 102.

<sup>91</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 130-131.

<sup>92</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, p. 355.

<sup>93</sup>Steel, *O.F.W.*, pp. 423-4.

<sup>94</sup>Sharpe, 1993, p. 103.

Greyman's household. In the absence of any necessity to clear domestic space, Tara's death has a double implication; firstly, it connotes resistance to the Indian Bride of England stereotype, and secondly, it must be read as the inevitable consequence of imperial policy on *sati*.<sup>95</sup> As Sharpe herself indicates, the abolition of *sati* failed to address the consequences for surviving Hindu widows who were obliged to undergo "prolonged fasting, enforced celibacy, and [a] perpetual state of mourning", and were denied any property rights.<sup>96</sup> In the absence of any resolution of the issues surrounding the colonial discourse of *sati*, or of the issues of child marriage and prostitution, Indian women are denied space in which to exist as death itself is preferable to the living death of widowhood, or to a future as a sex slave.

Unlike Schreiner's representation of black African women as resistant to imperialism, in *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, Steel's representation of Indian women's agency is weakened by a tendency to collapse into racial stereotyping. Not only is Tara shown to be the agent of Kate's safe delivery back to the British lines, and therefore complicit with an albeit ameliorated form of British imperialism, but Steel's tendency to represent Indian women as victims draws her novel close to the rhetoric of imperial feminism. This is only mitigated by her portrayal of Tara as an individual of potential unable to develop because of the constrictions of gender and race, and by her plangent critique of high-handed British policies careless towards Indian sensibilities and mores. By 1910, however, a new awareness in Anglo-Indian women's writing is manifested with the publication of Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Burnt Offering*, and Maud Diver's *Lilamani: A Study in Possibilities* in 1911.<sup>97</sup> The novels share many features; both deprecate the exploitation of the figure of the Indian woman in imperial feminist discourse through their juxtaposition of educated Indian woman protagonists to British women who have travelled to India with the express intention of 'raising' Indian women from subjection; both protagonists have undergone separation from their mothers, the bearers of traditional female roles, and are poised to accept or reject the

<sup>95</sup>There is an indirect connection between the plotting in *On the Face of the Waters* and in *Jane Eyre*, through Jean Rhys's reworking of the latter in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which portrays madness as the consequence of the hegemonic redefinition of the indigenous female subject.

<sup>96</sup>Sharpe, 1993, p. 105; *sati* was outlawed in 1829; the Hindu Women's Remarriage Act (1856), intended to alleviate conditions for widows, failed to address all the issues (Ghose, 1998; Sangari & Vaid, 1989).

<sup>97</sup>Duncan, Sara Jeannette: *The Burnt Offering*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1978; hereafter given as Duncan *T.B.O.*, first published by Methuen, London, 1909; Diver, Maud: *Lilamani: A Study in Possibilities*, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1911; hereafter given as Diver, *L.S.P.*

lives and mores of British patriarchy which their Anglicized upper-class fathers have adopted; the action in both works is set against the background of political agitation in Bengal in the early part of the twentieth century; finally, and perhaps, most significantly, in both novels it is the experience of Indian women and not that of English women which is central to the text, suggesting that the impulse to controvert the stereotype of the *memsahib* appears to be exhausted.

Of the two books, *The Burnt Offering* is the more sophisticated in both style and content, however, *Lilamani* is noteworthy for its representation of imperial feminism, and for its gentle probing of racial prejudices. Regardless of her conciliatory approach to race, however, Diver remains thirled, paradoxically, to hackneyed stereotyping to describe her protagonist. Through the scopophilic gaze of Nevil, the Orientalist painter who later becomes her husband, Lilamani's potential as sexualized subject is suggested by "olive skin" which is "faintly aglow"; she is "half veiled" by her *sari* and by "an alluring air of unreality".<sup>98</sup> As an embryonic and potentially fructuous woman waiting to be cultivated and plucked, she symbolizes the bounty which can accrue to Britain through the its marriage with India; the titles of the three volumes, 'The Seed', 'The Blossoming', and 'The Fruit', are clearly intended to indicate her personal growth to maturity and full womanhood, whilst the sentence "(a)t present she seemed little more than a sheaf of possibilities; a bud half open awaiting the strong kiss of the sun" hints strongly that her maturation can only be achieved under the tutelage of a white male, in this case Nevil.<sup>99</sup>

Nevertheless, Diver's wry characterization of the New Woman, Audrey Hammond, does succeed in interrogating the imperialist role adopted by the British women's movement. Coded as an imperial feminist through her "'advanced views on the Woman Question'", and her interest in "'doctoring zenana ladies'", Audrey has supplanted Lilamani's own mother, Mataji, as role model, by bringing the Indian girl to Europe to train as a doctor:

Audrey's tone and opinions faintly recalled Mataji herself. Both were capable and decisive; both slaves of a fetish. As the last word of Mataji was *dastur*, so the last

---

<sup>98</sup>Diver, *L.S.P.*, p. 3.

<sup>99</sup>Diver, *L.S.P.*, p. 4.



word of Audrey was Health.<sup>100</sup>

The narratorial disapproval of imperial feminism implicit in Audrey's officious "racial idealism", manifested in near fanaticism on matters relating to health, and in the revelation that she envisions herself the single-handed bearer of the white woman's burden, with the task of aiding Indian women, "'(r)ather like trying to alter a coastline by shifting pebbles on the shore'", is confirmed in Lilamani's speculation that by leaving her mother's authority to accept Audrey's "whether, in truth, she had but exchanged one form of tyranny for another".<sup>101</sup>

Despite the initiation of a critique of imperial feminism through her cameo sketch of Audrey, Diver does not develop it fully by exploring the ultimate significance of imperialist ideology to Indian women and to India. The novel is typical of her romantic plotting, and traces the protagonist's rejection of a medical career, her marriage to Nevil, and her eventual acceptance into his aristocratic family in the face of their racial prejudice and abhorrence of miscegenation.<sup>102</sup> This, together with the fact that following her early introduction of Lilamani to Europe as her protégée, Audrey has no further role and disappears from view, not only privileges European mores but also suggests a failure to interrogate imperial feminist motivation. Consequently, although Diver's work does attempt to explore issues of racial disharmony, it forecloses any conclusive subversion of racial stereotyping by confirming Lilamani, and India, as Bride of England.

Duncan's novel, *The Burnt Offering*, on the other hand, is a careful examination of mutual exploitation by British and Indians. Its successful interrogation of imperial values derives in part from her adroit manipulation of irony, an approach, which, as Misao Dean points out, is often used to cloak colonial counter-discourse:

like many colonial writers, ...[Duncan] used irony as a technique to disguise her critique of the ideology of the centre. She relied upon her reader to decipher the 'parallax,' the point of view from which her ironic statements would make sense.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup>Diver, *L.S.P.*, pp. 8, 20, & 25-6; Mataji is glossed as "Honoured Mother."

<sup>101</sup>Diver, *L.S.P.*, pp. 22, 8, & 26.

<sup>102</sup>Diver's reputation was built on the popularity of a series of novels, which she called *Indian Frontier Romances*, many featuring the eponymous hero of *Captain Desmond, V.C.* (Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1907)

<sup>103</sup>Dean, Misao: *A Different Point of View: Sara Jeannette Duncan*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1991, p. 10.

The parallax, which Dean also describes as Duncan's "riddling utterance", is introduced through the medium of an apparently detached narrator making occasional, keenly-edged first person intrusions, and through the percipient asides of minor characters functioning rather like the commentary of a Greek chorus.<sup>104</sup> The reader is thereby invited to contextualize and adjudge these remarks and to draw her or his own conclusions about the mismatch of moral values.

The novel's keenest barbs are reserved for representatives of imperial power, and especially for those from the metropolitan centre. Like Steel's *On the Face of the Waters*, it focuses on the pivotal function of the figure of woman in imperialist racial rhetoric by contrasting the experience of a white woman, Joan Mills, to that of an Indian woman, the Rani Janaki. However, in Duncan's work the correlation between race, gender, empire, and white male hegemony is rendered more explicit as her parallel stories explore racial subjectivity by comparing the women in dyadic relationship to their fathers, and, consequently, to their fathers' ideologies.

Against the background of mounting political unrest in early twentieth-century Calcutta, Joan, a Girton-educated suffragette and imperial feminist who has been twice jailed, and her father, the appositely named Vulcan Mills, Member of the British Parliament for Further Angus, whose stock-in-trade is a fiery, bombastic rhetoric, maintain that they have travelled to India in order "to learn".<sup>105</sup> As a latter-day incarnation of Kipling's 'Globe-Trotter', and liable therefore "to say insulting and offensive things about 'Anglo-Indian Society'", Mills has taken "the 'cause of India' into his knapsack".<sup>106</sup> Yet this remark is counterposed to one made by an Anglo-Indian official to his wife early in the novel, "(a) man like Mills, you see, is out for the cause of the people - any cause and any people".<sup>107</sup> Not only does Duncan's pervasive irony serve to undermine Mills' rhetoric, but it also prompts the reader to maintain close scrutiny of the duo's motivation. For example, when the Mills first meet Bepin Behari Bey, following his unwarranted exclusion from the train carriage on grounds of race, Joan's offer of a cigarette to him appears to reveal a disingenuous lack of racial

---

<sup>104</sup>Dean, 1991, p. 22.

<sup>105</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, pp. 15 & 9.

<sup>106</sup>Kipling, 'A Friend's Friend', *P.T.*, p. 269; Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 126.

<sup>107</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 15.

prejudice: "The act was perfectly simple, grave, and matter of fact"; but the narratorial intrusion immediately following provides the sting in the tail, "and it looked unpremeditated, *though I think it was not that*".<sup>108</sup>

The Rani Janaki and her father represent "the new enlightenment" of Hindu patriarchy, despite the fact that both have been firmly rooted in Hindu tradition.<sup>109</sup> Like Tara and Zora, Janaki embodies imperial feminist concerns about child brides and the practice of *sati*, having been given by her father in an arranged marriage as a child bride at the age of six, and widowed "a year after, having paid but one shy and formal visit to her husband's father's house".<sup>110</sup> Although like Tara, Janaki "had no place" in Hindu society as "she belonged and must ever belong" to "the spirit of the dead boy", and although her life of widowhood is austere, she also represents the educative potential of Indian women because she has benefited from a Western education in Oxford.<sup>111</sup> Likewise, her father, Sir Kristodas Mukerji, K.C.I.E., represents the new emergent class of Indian autocrat, educated according to the spirit of the Macaulay 'Minute on Education' to be "English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect".<sup>112</sup> Their household therefore denotes a move towards the negation of Indian culture and tradition, with its reproductions of Leighton's *Wedded* and Watts's *Happy Warrior* in place of "very fine reproductions" of Hindu divinities, and its *shalgram*, or sacred stone, relegated to the upper shelf of the library "in the dust between Spencer and Spinoza".<sup>113</sup>

Sir Kristodas's position as a judge not only bespeaks an ideological proximity to the British administration, but also his relevance as a signifier in imperialist discourse through the controversial Ilbert Bill, introduced in 1883 in order to appoint Indians to the judiciary. In a resounding echo of 'Mutiny' rape-revenge rhetoric, those opposing

<sup>108</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 6; my emphasis.

<sup>109</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 38.

<sup>110</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 36.

<sup>111</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, pp. 38 & 36.

<sup>112</sup>Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59), legal adviser to the Supreme Council of India 1834-8; his famous 1835 memorandum on Indian education recommends the production of "a consultative autocracy ... by opening participation in government to 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect'" (Read, Donald: *England, 1868-1914: The age of urban democracy*, Longman, Harlow, 1979 p. 480) The British honours system was imported to India from 1860 onwards. (James, 1997, p. 319)

<sup>113</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, pp. 157, 37-8, & 153

the bill invoked the spectral tripos of black men, white women, and matters sexual. As Jenny Sharpe explains, commercial interests appear to have been instrumental in instigating the controversy:

The bill's most vocal opponents were the tea and indigo planters in Bengal, who feared that Indian judges would be more likely than British judges to prosecute them for mistreating their workers. Their fear, however, was expressed in terms of the mistreatment English women would suffer under the new law. There was an outcry over the humiliation English women would have to undergo if native judges were to hear cases of rape. And rumors (*sic*) circulated about Indians, encouraged by the liberties of the proposal, attempting to rape an English woman in Calcutta.<sup>114</sup>

Although the intensity of the furore surrounding the bill can be gauged by Rudyard Kipling's comment at the time, "Old stagers say that race feeling has never been so high since the Mutiny", the rumours circulating appear to be attributable to the controlling impulse of imperialist discourse. This likelihood is confirmed by Wilfred Scawen Blunt's assessment of the affair two years after the uproar, "as to the probability of any real abuse of their position by native judges with Englishwomen, I am certain that the whole thing was purely fictitious".<sup>115</sup>

Duncan's "riddling utterances" constantly shift the reader's perspective of the political struggle in Bengal to illustrate that nothing is ever as it first appears to be. The moral imperatives of empire, embodied on the one hand in Mills' Benthamite utilitarianism and his daughter's imperial feminism, and on the other in the vested interests of the Anglo-Indian commercial and diplomatic communities, are systematically explored and exploded so that the Mills' idealism, "in the mantle of their ignorance and the fire of their enthusiasm", is reworked, showing them not just to be cloaked in ignorance, but also as dangerous as the subterranean fire which Mills' forename connotes.<sup>116</sup> Like the British in Steel's *On the Face of the Waters*, the Mills are unable to read the semiotics of India. When they are taken by the seditionist leader, Ganendra Thakore, to see Indians who, they are told, are starving in a famine district, they are not shown the British famine relief camps, nor do they realize their visit has been stage-managed and

---

<sup>114</sup>Sharpe, 1993, p. 89;

<sup>115</sup>Kipling, in a letter to his sister; *Letters, I*, p. 35, cited in James, 1997, p. 349; Blunt, 1885, p. 64. The Bill was eventually adopted in 1884.

<sup>116</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 25.

that those in genuine need are being manipulated by Thakore, just as they are themselves.<sup>117</sup>

Against this volatile background, the bodies of women remain the loci of imperial desire and of interracial contention, yet Duncan reverses the paradigms of masculinist and feminist imperial discourse to show India on the cusp of change. John Game, the archetypal Anglo-Indian administrator and Orientalist, is wedded to India, his "old official mistress", and in the past Janaki has represented to him "the India of his old dreams, the bride of his country, the enchantress of his race".<sup>118</sup> However, by rejecting her letter warning him of the "deadly attempt" on the Viceroy's life, he rejects not only Janaki's shy advances and, therefore, the opportunity to connect with the real India, but life itself, for he dies as a result of the assassination attempt.<sup>119</sup> The old-style wooing of India as the bride of Britain is, it seems, doomed to perish. For Bepin Behari Dey, it is the imperial feminist, Joan, who is "a covetable possession with an honoured place in the zenana", both as a prestigious prize and as a conduit to the British Parliament through her father, because of the ideological opportunities she offers to the revolutionary terrorist cell which is his primary concern.<sup>120</sup> The deep-seated prejudices of imperialism are unmasked through Joan and her father, for it is she, in the guise of British bride of India, and not Janaki, the Hindu widow and potential candidate for *sati*, who is figured as the burnt offering of the title. Vulcan Mills, the idealist who believes prejudice against "the mingling of the races" through marriage to be "the mere survival of a tribal fetish", is forced to confront both his own racial conscience and his commitment to his ideals with his daughter's marriage to Dey, a demand which Duncan parallels to the biblical "act of Abraham", the sacrifice by fire of one's own offspring in the cause of one's religion.<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup>Some of Duncan's characters appear to have been based on real people. Ganendra Thakore's surname recalls that of the poet/philosopher, Sir Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Duncan's accusation that Tagore provoked sedition appeared in the *Indian Daily News* of 4.4.1897. The character of Thakore is also thought to resemble Bal Gangadhar Tilak, militant nationalist and owner-editor of anti-British publications, who campaigned to extend the Indian boycott of British goods beyond Bengal. Mills is believed to be based on the pacifist and Scottish Labour leader, Keir Hardie (1856-1915). (Dean, 1991, p. 171, nn. 19 & 20)

<sup>118</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 363.

<sup>119</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 300.

<sup>120</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 183.

<sup>121</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, pp. 200-1; Duncan draws upon the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac: "Take thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Mo-ri-ah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of". (Genesis, 22:2)

*The Burnt Offering* is a novel which not only presages the end of British rule in India, but its ironic undertones and content prefigure E.M. Forster's *Passage to India* (1924).<sup>122</sup> Duncan's closure, showing the withdrawal of Janaki and her father to the "Way" prescribed by their own culture and their renewal of commitment to the Hindu religion, warns against further anglicization of India whilst also suggesting its readiness for independence and confirming the necessity for British withdrawal.<sup>123</sup> Whereas Steel suggests that Indian widows are doomed to live as outcasts or to sacrifice themselves under both Indian and imperial patriarchies, Duncan shows that they can be reabsorbed into their own culture. As a corollary, the sacrifice of the British self to the causes of India is shown to be superfluous: Game's death signals the passing of a type; Mills is deported by the British authorities having tried to support the seditionists at a public meeting. Imperial feminism, in the person of Joan, an antecedent of Forster's Adela Quested, is dealt with more severely: her impulse to dedicate herself to India as "a ministry of love"<sup>124</sup> and to teach in the zenana is counterbalanced by the narrator's laconic description of her return to Britain following Dey's death in the bungled assassination attempt, a description that suggests that Joan has more to learn from India than India has to learn from her:

She left for Bombay by the mail train of the next evening, having added to her luggage, *let us hope not unprofitably*, several volumes of that very charming series entitled 'The Wisdom of the East.'<sup>124</sup>

Writing about racial antagonism in nineteenth-century fiction, Patrick Brantlinger has remarked that Indian 'Mutiny' fiction adopts the well at Cawnpore as a symbol of racial barbarism. This, he believes, is linked to a sense of what he calls "imperial gothic", which pervades Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and Forster's *Passage to India*.<sup>125</sup> In the case of Conrad's novella, Brantlinger suggests that "the African wilderness serves as a mirror, in whose darkness Conrad/Marlow sees a death-pale self-image named Kurtz".<sup>126</sup> "The horror" is simultaneously a fear of what the self might become *and* a fear of the other. Interracial fear is, he indicates, an abyss;

<sup>122</sup>Forster visited Duncan and her husband, Everard Cotes, at their home in Simla in 1912, three years after the publication of *T.B.O.* He describes her as "clever and odd - nice to talk to alone, but at times the Social Manner descended like a pall" (Letter to his mother, dated 21 November 1912, in eds. Mary Lago & P.N. Furbank: *Selected Letters of E.M. Forster, Vol. I, 1879-1920*, Arrow, London, 1983)

<sup>123</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, p. 319

<sup>124</sup>Duncan, *T.B.O.*, pp. 124 & 318, my emphasis

<sup>125</sup>Brantlinger, 1988, p. 227

<sup>126</sup>Brantlinger, 1988, p. 268

the chasm into which Marlow stares is also the well at Cawnpore and the Marabar caves. Yet, this fear appears to have been fomented by muscular imperialist rhetoric because, as Brantlinger also points out, “(t)he voices that come from the heart of darkness are almost exclusively white and male, as usual in imperialist texts”.<sup>127</sup> The colonial feminist texts written by Steel, Diver, and Duncan, are therefore noteworthy for their exploration of, and dispersal of, the fear of the racialized other emanating from masculinist discourse. Crucially, in the process of this exploration their texts, like Judith Wright’s words in the epigraph to this chapter, centre the experience of their “shadow sisters”, and, in some cases, even cast the white female in the shadows. The work of these colonial women writers, rather than peering into a well to reflect back racial fear and hatred, mirrors indigenous peoples as equals and exposes the shortcomings of white imperialism.

§§§

---

<sup>127</sup>Brantlinger, 1998, p. 271.

## Conclusion

To live in prison is to live without mirrors.  
To live without mirrors is to live without the self.<sup>1</sup>

§§§

As a corpus, colonial women's writing offers a formidable critique of white patriarchal power and of imperial ideology. As I have discussed, in terms of postcolonial literary theory, the social emplacement of white women during the colonial period and since precludes the location of their work alongside that of black indigenes of either sex. My aim in this thesis has not been to provide a theory which reorients white women's writing in this context, but to draw attention to the ways in which it embodies certain of the oppositional characteristics to be found in postcolonial literatures, many of which postdate the empire, and through doing so to suggest ways in which white male power was negotiated.

Stephen Slemon argues that "in the white literatures of Australia, or New Zealand, or Canada, or southern Africa, anti-colonialist resistance has *never* been directed at an object or discursive structure which can be seen as purely external to the self".<sup>2</sup> However, despite charges of white female complicity in the imperial project, the colonial feminist critique of imperial historiography, of muscular imperialist discourse, and of constructions of race, class, and gender discussed Chapters Four and Five illustrates that, unlike imperial feminists, colonial women writers regarded the dynamics of imperialism as being external to the *female* self.

Moreover, the thematic shift, in many of the works I have discussed, from the use of looking-glass symbology to the use of the act of writing as a looking-glass in which to reflect the rebuilding of the female self, can also be seen as breaking with hegemonic values. This reorientation, from a state of being transfixed "in the motionless, silvered trap" of the mirror of female acculturation, as it is described by Simone de Beauvoir, indicates that, far from being internalized, cultural constructions of womanhood are being negated and/or externalized.

---

<sup>1</sup>Atwood, Margaret: 'Marrying the Hangman', in *Two-Headed Poems*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Slemon, Stephen: 'Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World', in *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 30. No. 2, 1990, p. 38.



The body of work by colonial feminist writers is considerable. Significantly, there is evidence that it can be viewed as an cohesive, organic entity which stimulated women readers throughout the world into becoming writers themselves, many of whom contributed to the burgeoning colonial feminist literary tradition. In light of this evidence, it is surprising that Ruth First and Ann Scott maintain that they have been "unable confidently" to place Olive Schreiner within "a discrete female or feminist tradition" despite the fact that *The Story of an African Farm* appears to have been particularly inspirational.<sup>3</sup> Not only do Henry Handel Richardson and Doris Lessing seek to locate their own novels in the same tradition as Schreiner's, but 'Isak Dinesen' (Karen Blixen), author of *Out of Africa* (1938), also acknowledges a debt to Schreiner: "it was one of my favourite books a long time before I knew that I myself would ever come to make Africa my home, and wish to lay my bones in her soil".<sup>4</sup> Writing on South African fiction, Winifred Holtby says of the novel:

'The Story of an African Farm,' by Ralph Iron, still remains a thing of wonder for us. Its passion, its poetry, its fierce, lyrical ardour of imagination still astonish us. There is no other book quite like it.<sup>5</sup>

The title of Jane Mander's first novel, *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920), also pays an implicit debt to Schreiner; in addition, the plot traces the late *Bildung*, in the patriarchal fastnesses of the New Zealand bush, of a mature woman who, in the early pages, is loaned "a wonderful new novel called *The Story of an African Farm*".<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the posthumously-published autobiographical work by Robin Hyde, *A Home in this World*, reveals her intimate knowledge of Schreiner's text: "I can only see these things and go on. The man in Olive Schreiner's dream-story of the quest for truth passed mark after mark on the cliffs, cut where people had failed. I cut my mark where I have failed, at trying to be a completely human being".<sup>7</sup> Other allegories by Schreiner proved equally uplifting to women. Constance Lytton tells how, from memory, imprisoned suffragettes retold Schreiner's 'dreams' to one another: "Olive Schreiner, more than any one other author, has rightly interpreted the woman's movement and

<sup>3</sup>First, Ruth & Ann Scott: *Olive Schreiner*, The Women's Press, London, 1989, p. 15; first published by André Deutsch, London, 1980.

<sup>4</sup>Dinesen, Isak: Introduction to Olive Schreiner: *The Story of an African Farm*, Limited Editions Club, New York, 1961.

<sup>5</sup>Holtby, Winifred: 'Writers of South Africa', in *The Bookman*, Vol. 76, No. 456, September 1929, p. 280.

<sup>6</sup>Mander, Jane: *The Story of a New Zealand River*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch, N.Z., 1960, p. 27; first published in U.S.A., 1920; first published in U.K. By Robert Hale, London, 1938, and in N.Z. By Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch, 1938.

<sup>7</sup>Hyde, Robin: *A Home in this World*, Longman Paul, Auckland, 1984, p. 46.

symbolised it in her writings. ...The words hit out a bare literal description of the pilgrimage of women".<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Australian feminist, writer, and publisher, Louisa Lawson, writes in her feminist journal, *The Dawn*, of Olive Schreiner's "splendid illustration" in 'Three Dreams in a Desert' (1890).<sup>9</sup>

Yet it would be wrong to view Schreiner as the sole source of influence, or prime mover, in the network which has become colonial feminist literature. When asked to nominate a novel to a new pocket library of Australian literature, Miles Franklin selected Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison*, which she compares favourably with Australia's male literary canon:

*Clara Morison* is nourishing as the product of an abler mind than possessed by either the author of *Geoffrey Hamlyn* or of *Robbery Under Arms*. It might not have had the brilliance and emotional intensity of Clarke's, but it was wiser and deeper. *Clara Morison* is the only early Australian novel that suggests a mind approaching that of Joseph Furphy's in capaciousness and sagacity.

...The work breathes that ability and integrity which distinguishes the 'grand old woman of Australia', which Catherine Helen Spence became.<sup>10</sup>

Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* has also proved to be an inspirational model for subsequent generations. Like that of her sister, Catherine Parr Traill, her writing marks the emergence of the Pioneer Woman, a Canadian archetype which can be traced from the 1850s up until the present day. For example, as Elizabeth Thompson points out, "the ideal pioneer woman" can be seen in Sara Jeannette Duncan's subsidiary character, Mrs Murchison, in *The Imperialist* (1909). The novel focuses on the *Bildung* of her daughter, Advena, who, as her name suggests, is the new, or coming woman of Canada; university-educated, she represents the challenges for women on new frontiers "composed of social attitudes and issues".<sup>11</sup>

The living legacy of women's colonial writing persists, even in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries. In Canadian literature, for example, the character of the Pioneer Woman survives in several forms. Margaret Atwood felt inspired to write *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), in order to explore "the hints, the gaps between

<sup>8</sup>Lytton, Constance: *Prisons and Prisoners: The Stirring Testimony of a Suffragette*, Virago, London, 1988, p. 157; first published by William Heinemann, London, 1914.

<sup>9</sup>Lawson, Louisa: *The Dawn*, 1.2.1905.

<sup>10</sup>Franklin, S.M.: 'Clara Morison: Australian Classic No. 4,' in *Australia New Writing*, pp 45-6; published on microfilm 'Catherine Helen Spence,' mf 45(3), National Library of Scotland.

<sup>11</sup>Thompson, Elizabeth: *The Pioneer Woman: A Canadian Character Type*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1991, p. 61.

what was said and what hovered, just unsaid, between the lines" in *Roughing it in the Bush*, and to examine the "most complex and ambiguous character" in the book, namely Moodie herself.<sup>12</sup> Tellingly, Atwood's 'Looking in a Mirror' focuses on the incipient awareness of the female self by capturing Moodie's sense of the transformation wrought on her by her sojourn in the bush: "It was as if I woke/after a sleep of seven years/ ...My heirloom face I brought/with me a crushed eggshell/among other debris".<sup>13</sup> Atwood's novel, *Surfacing* (1972) can also be read as a recovery of the past and as confrontation with the spirit of the Pioneer Woman. Yet, whereas Moodie epitomizes one aspect of the female frontierswoman, another offshoot of this character type, also deriving from *Roughing it in the Bush*, is discernible in what Atwood has called the "powerful, negative old women" of Canadian fiction, the most potent example being Margaret Laurence's Hagar Shipley in *The Stone Angel* (1964).<sup>14</sup> Not only does Hagar recall the obdurate Betty Fye and her counterparts who are Moodie's neighbours in the bush, but the title, and Hagar's petrification in obstinacy unable to utter her love, also recall the tombstone epitaph of Moodie's Silence Sharman.

My examination of colonial feminist writing in this thesis has been bounded by limitations of time and space, but, in the course of my research, I have noted additional related avenues of inquiry which it would be profitable to pursue. Most of these relate to broadening the scope of the project, and would involve conducting more research on writers already discussed, branching into different female genres to determine whether similar patterns exist, for instance, in romantic fiction, and including feminist polemic in order to locate fiction, play writing, and poetry, alongside the development of the colonial feminist consciousness. Just as Laura Chrisman has undertaken a thematic comparison of Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* to Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, so other works from the colonial period written by black indigenes deserve to be examined for critiques of imperialism, not only to expose the workings of white male power, but also to restore them to public view.

---

<sup>12</sup>Atwood, Margaret: Introduction to Susanna Moodie: *Roughing it in the Bush*, Virago, London, 1986, pp. viii & xiii; first published by Richard Bentley, London, 1852.

<sup>13</sup>Atwood, Margaret: 'Looking in a Mirror', in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1970, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup>Atwood, Margaret: *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1996, p. 205; first published by House of Anansi Press, Toronto, 1972.

In addition, there is a significant recurring theme which deserves further investigation: in many of the works examined, utopian ideals inevitably underlie the exposition of the dystopian, patriarchal wilderness because, even in the act of interrogating male hegemony, the supposition that matters would become magically different if gender and race power relations were equalized, haunts the texts. Indeed, some colonial women writers were acutely aware that colonialism presented opportunities to create an ideal society, but that these were being dissipated: for example, Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison* is clearly utopian in outlook, but she also went on to write *A Week in the Future* and *Handfasted*, both of which draw more overtly on the ideals of utopianism.<sup>15</sup> Utopian novels, such as Spence's, deserve further study against the discursive framework I have delineated because they are likely to reveal as much about power relations as about feminist aspirations.

Elaine Showalter has written of Olive Schreiner that "her insistent and sometimes nagging narrative voice takes us to the reality of female experience". This voice, Showalter maintains, is the "genuine accent of womanhood, ...the fitful, fretful rhythm of women's daily lives, a Beckett monolog without a beginning or an end".<sup>16</sup> As I have shown, Schreiner is indeed a key figure at the heart of colonial feminist writing, yet she does not stand alone, nor is the collective voice of colonial feminism a nagging, fitful, fretful one: rather it is defiant, demanding, occasionally earnest and declamatory, but at all times determined to resist the distorting mirrors of patriarchy. It is the voice of Clara Morison and Margaret Elliot; it is the voices of Susanna Moodie and Betty Fye; it is Sybylla's exuberant tones, Colenso's measured, mannered, angry inflections, and Duncan's elegant but caustic irony; it is Eliza and Lyndall's implacable opposition to the stifling enclosures of femininity. Above all, the collective voice of colonial feminist writing is pithy, vibrant, inventive, and enduring in its appeal.

§§§

<sup>15</sup>Spence's novel, *A Week in the Future*, first appeared in serial form in *Centennial Magazine*, 1888-9; *Handfasted*, a novel written for a literary competition in 1879 and was only published in 1984, some 74 years after Spence's death. Of *Handfasted*, which describes, amongst other things, a land-owning, emancipated, and highly-educated female population, benefiting from trial marriage in the hitherto undiscovered country of Columba, Spence says, "I tried for a prize of £100 offered by the *Sydney Mail* with a novel called *Handfasted* but it was not successful, for the judge feared that it was calculated to loosen the marriage tie - it was too socialistic, and consequently dangerous". Spence, Catherine Helen. *Catherine Helen Spence: An Autobiography*, W.K. Thomas & Co., Adelaide, 1910, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup>Showalter, Elaine: *A Literature of Their Own: from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing*, Virago, London, 1999, p. 198; first published by Virago, London, 1978.

## Bibliography

(Note: where details of more than one edition are given, the edition used as the chief source of page references is given in bold)

### A. Previously unpublished material

Blackwood Archive: Folio Nos. 30127, 30135, 30149, 30608, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh  
B.G.C. 135, Mitchell Library, State Library of N.S.W., Sydney

### B. Primary texts

#### 1. By colonial or postcolonial women writers:

##### i. Works discussed in thesis

- Atwood, Margaret: *Surfacing*, Virago, London, 1979; first published by André Deutsch, London, 1973  
Atwood, Margaret: *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1970  
Atwood, Margaret: 'Marrying the Hangman', in *Two-headed Poems*, 1978  
Boddy, Gillian & Jacqueline Matthews (eds.): *Disputed Ground: Robin Hyde, Journalist*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1991  
**Carr, Emily: *Klee Wyck*, Irwin Publishing Inc., Toronto, 1965; first published by Irwin Publishing Inc., Toronto, 1949**  
**Colenso, Frances E.: *My Chief and I, or Six Months in Natal After the Langalibalele Outbreak*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1994; first published by Chapman & Hall, London, 1880**  
Colenso, Frances E.: *The History of the Zulu War and Its Origins (assisted in those portions of the work which touch upon military matters by Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Durnford)*, Chapman & Hall, London, 1880  
Colenso, Frances E.: *The Ruin of Zululand; An Account of British Doings in Zululand Since the Invasion of 1879*, William Ridgway, London, 1884 & 1885  
Diver, Maud: *The Englishwoman in India*, Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1909  
Diver, Maud: *Lilamani: A Study in Possibilities*, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1911  
Dixie, Lady Florence: *A Defence of Zululand and its King: Echoes from the Blue-books with an Appendix containing correspondence of the release of Cetshwayo etc.*, Chatto & Windus, 1881  
Duncan, Sara Jeannette: *The Imperialist*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1971; first published by Copp Clark Publishing., Toronto, 1904.  
**Duncan, Sara Jeannette: *The Burnt Offering*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1978; first published by Methuen, London, 1909**  
Frame, Janet: 'The Pocket Mirror', in *The Pocket Mirror*, George Braziller, New York, 1967  
**Franklin, Miles: *My Brilliant Career*, Virago, London, 1980; first published by Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1901**  
Gordimer, Nadine: *Writing and Being*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1996

- Gunn, Mrs Aeneas (Jeannie Gunn): *We of the Never-Never & The Little Black Princess*, (combined edition), Angus & Robertson/HarperCollins, Pymble, 1996; *The Little Black Princess* first published by De La More Press, London, 1905; *We of the Never-Never* by first published by Hutchinson, London, 1908;
- Hyde, Robin: *The Godwits Fly*, University of Auckland Press, Auckland, 1970;** first published by Hurst and Blackett, London, 1938
- Hyde, Robin: 'The Singers of Loneliness', in *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, August 1938
- Hyde, Robin: *A Home in this World*, Longman Paul, Auckland, 1984
- Laurence, Margaret: *The Stone Angel*, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1964
- Lawson, Louisa: *The Dawn*, 1.2.1905
- Lessing, Doris: *Martha Quest*, HarperCollins, London 1993;** first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1952
- Lessing Doris: *The Golden Notebook*, Flamingo HarperCollins, London, 1993;** first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1962
- Lessing, Doris: *The Four-Gated City*, HarperCollins, London, 1993; first published by MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1969
- Lessing, Doris: *Collected African Stories, Vol II: The Sun Between Their Feet*, Triad Grafton, London, 1979;** first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1973
- Mander, Jane: *The Story of a New Zealand River*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch, N.Z., 1960;** first published by Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch, 1938 & Robert Hale, London, 1938
- Moodie, Susanna: *Roughing it in the Bush, or Forest Life in Canada*, facsimile edition Coles Publishing Co., Toronto, 1980; edition first published by Bell & Cockburn, Toronto, 1913; first published by Richard Bentley, London, 1852
- Moodie, Susanna: *Roughing it in the Bush*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1962 & 1970; first published by Richard Bentley, London, 1852
- Moodie, Susanna: *Roughing it in the Bush*, Virago, London, 1986;** first published by Richard Bentley, London, 1852
- Moodie, Susanna: *Roughing it in the Bush*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1989; first published by Richard Bentley, London, 1852
- Moodie, Susanna: *Roughing it in the Bush, or Life in Canada*, Carleton University Press, Ottawa, 1988; first published by Richard Bentley, London, 1852
- Pereira, Ernest (ed.): *The Unknown Pauline Smith: Unpublished and Out of Print Stories, Diaries, and Other Prose Writings*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1993
- Prichard, Katharine Susannah: *Coonardoo*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1990;** first published as *Coonardoo (The Well in the Shadow)*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1929
- Rhys, Jean: *Voyage in the Dark*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969;** first published by Constable, London, 1934
- Rhys, Jean: *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968;** first published by André Deutsch, London, 1966
- Richardson, Henry Handel: *The Getting of Wisdom*, Virago, London, 1981; first published by William Heinemann, London, 1910
- Schlueter, Paul (ed.): *Doris Lessing: A Small Personal Voice*, Flamingo HarperCollins, London, 1994;** first published by Knopf, New York, 1974

- Schreiner, Olive: *The Story of an African Farm*, Virago, London, 1989; first published by Chapman and Hall, London, 1883
- Schreiner, Olive: *The Story of an African Farm* (with introduction by Isak Dinesen), Limited Editions Club, New York, 1961; first published by Chapman and Hall, London, 1883
- Schreiner, Olive: *The Story of an African Farm*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998; first published by Chapman and Hall, London, 1883
- Schreiner, Olive: *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1926; first published by T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1897
- Schreiner, Olive: *Dream Life and Real Life*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1893
- Smith, Pauline: *The Beadle*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1989; first published by Jonathan Cape, London, 1926
- Spence, Catherine Helen: Clara Morison, in (ed.) Helen Thomson: *Catherine Helen Spence*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1987; first published by John W. Parker & Son, London, 1854
- Spence, Catherine Helen: *Clara Morison* (facsimile edition), Wakefield Press, Kent Town, S. Australia, 1994; first published by J.W. Parker, London, 1854
- Spence, Catherine Helen: *A Week in the Future*, serialized in *Centennial Magazine*, 1889
- Spence, Catherine Helen: *Catherine Helen Spence: An Autobiography*, W.K. Thomas & Co., Adelaide, 1910
- Spence, Catherine Helen: *Handfasted*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1984
- Stead, C.K. (ed.): *Katherine Mansfield: Letters and Journals*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977
- Steel, Flora Annie: *On the Face of the Waters*, Heinemann, London, 1896
- Steel, Flora Annie: *The Garden of Fidelity: The Autobiography of Flora Annie Steel, 1847-1929*, Macmillan London, 1929
- Wright, Judith: *A Human Pattern: Selected Poems*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1990

**ii. Further works by colonial women writers, examined in the course of research:**

- Barter, Charlotte: *Alone Among the Zulus, by a Plain Woman: The Narrative of a Journey through the Zulu Country, South Africa*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1866
- Cambridge, Ada: *Unspoken Thoughts*, University College, University of N.S.W., 1988; first published by Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., London, 1887
- Diver, Maud: *Candles in the Wind*, William Blackwood, Edinburgh
- Dixie, Lady Florence: *Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900*, Henry & Co., London, 1890
- Duncan, Sara Jeannette: *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib*, Tecumseh Press, Ottawa, 1986; first published London, 1893
- Franklin, Miles: *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*, Virago, London, 1986; first published by William Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1909
- Franklin, Miles: *My Career Goes Bung*, Virago London, 1988; first published by Georgian House, Melbourne, 1946
- Hampton, Susan & Kate Llewellyn (eds.): *The Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets*, Penguin, Ringway, Australia, 1986
- Lawson, Olive: *The First Voice of Australian Feminism: Excerpts from Louisa Lawson's The Dawn, 1888-1895*, Simon & Schuster, Brookvale, N.S.W., 1990

- Lessing, Doris: *The Grass is Singing*, Paladin, London, 1989; first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1950
- Lessing, Doris: *Collected African Stories, Vol. 1: This was the Old Chief's Country*, HarperCollins, London, 1992; first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1951
- Lessing, Doris, *A Proper Marriage*, HarperCollins, London, 1993; first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1954
- Lessing, Doris: *A Ripple from the Storm*, HarperCollins, London, 1993; first published by Michael Joseph, London, 1958
- Lessing, Doris: *Landlocked*, HarperCollins, London, 1993; first published by MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1965
- McClung, Nellie: *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, Doubleday, London, 1908
- McClung, Nellie: *In Times Like These*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1972; first published New York and London, 1915
- Moodie, Susanna: *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1989
- Ostenso, Martha: *Wild Geese*, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1971; first published by Dodd, Mead & Co. Inc., Canada, 1925
- Schreiner, Olive: *Thoughts on South Africa*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1923
- Smith, Pauline: *The Little Karoo*, David Philip, Claremont, S.A., 1990; first published by Jonathan Cape, London, 1925

## 2. Other primary texts:

- Anon: 'Our Female Supernumeraries', *Punch*, Vol. XVIII, January-June 1850
- Anon: 'The Needlewoman's Farewell', *Punch*, Vol. XVIII, January-June 1850
- Austen, Jane: *Northanger Abbey*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991; first published 1818
- Barrett Browning, Elizabeth: *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, with Two Prose Essays*, Oxford University Press, London, 1916
- Dickens, Charles: *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son*, first published 1847-8
- Dickens, Charles: *The Personal History, Adventures, Experience, and Observation of David Copperfield*, (ed.) Nina Burgis, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981; first published Bradbury & Evans, London, in monthly parts May 1849-November 1850
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins: *Herland*, The Women's Press, London, 1979; first published in serial form in *The Forerunner*, 1915
- Gordon, Adam Lindsay: *The Poetical Works of Adam Lindsay Gordon*, Ward Lock & Co., Melbourne
- Haggard, H. Rider: *King Solomon's Mines*, Cassell, London, 1965; first published 1886
- Hood, Thomas: 'The Song of the Shirt', *Punch*, Vol. V, July-December 1843
- Hood, Thomas: *Passages from the Poems of Thomas Hood, Illustrated by the Junior Etching Club*, London, 1858
- Hood, Thomas: *Poems by Thomas Hood, Illustrated by Gustave Doré*, E. Moxon, Son & Co., London, 1878
- Hood, Thomas: *Selected Poems of Thomas Hood* (ed. John Clubbe), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1970
- Hood, Thomas: 'Bridge of Sighs', in (ed.) Francis Turner Palgrave: *The Golden Treasury*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1994
- Kipling, Rudyard: *Plain Tales from the Hills*, Macmillan, London, 1965
- Kipling, Rudyard: *The Man who would be King, and Other Stories* (ed. Louis Cornell), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987



- Lawson, Henry: *While the Billy Boils*, Robert Hale, London, 1972
- Lawson, Henry: *The Poetical Works of Henry Lawson*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, Australia, 1984
- Levi, Primo: 'The Mirror Maker', in *The Mirror Maker* (translated by Raymond Rosenthal), Little Brown & Co., London, 1997; first published by Editrice La Stampa, Turin, 1986
- Mew, Charlotte: 'The Farmer's Wife', *The Nation*, 3.2.1912
- Rossetti, Dante Gabriel: 'The Orchard Pit', in (ed.) William M. Rossetti: *The Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Ellis, London, 1912
- 'Spec' (pseud. of William Makepeace Thackeray): 'Waiting at the Station', *Punch*, Vol. XXVIII, January-June 1850
- Thackeray, William Makepeace: see 'Spec'
- Woolf, Virginia: *A Room of One's Own*, Hogarth Press, London, 1929; reprinted in (ed.) Michèle Barrett: *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1993
- Woolf, Virginia: 'A Sketch of the Past', in (ed.) Jeanne Schulkind: *Moments of Being*, Grafton/HarperCollins, London, 1989
- Woolf, Virginia: 'Women and Fiction', in (ed.) Michèle Barrett: *Virginia Woolf on Women and Writing*, The Women's Press, London, 1979; first published in *The Forum*, March 1929
- Wordsworth, William: 'The Character of the Happy Warrior', in (ed.) Stephen Gill: *William Wordsworth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984

### C. Reviews:

- Anon: 'The Story of an African Farm', in *English Women's Review of Social and Industrial Questions*, 15 August, 1883
- Anon: 'The Schreiner Bomb', in *The Literary World*, February 26, 1897
- Anon: 'Trooper Peter Halket', in *The Spectator*, February 27, 1897
- Anon (Hilda Caroline Gregg): 'The Indian Mutiny in Fiction', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1897
- Anon: 'Recent Books - French and English', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, April 1897
- Franklin, S.M.: 'Clara Morison, Australian Classic No. 4', in *Australian New Writing*, published on microfilm 'Catherine Helen Spence'; mf 45(3); National Library of Scotland
- Holtby, Winifred: 'Writers of South Africa', in *Bookman*, Vol. 76, No. 456, September 1929
- 'Q' (Arthur T. Quiller-Couch): 'Review of *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*', in *The Speaker*, February 27, 1897
- Stead, W.T.: 'If Christ came to Matabeleland', in *Review of Reviews*, March 1897

### D. Secondary texts:

#### 1. Published before 1900:

- Anon: *The New Female Instructor: Or, Young Woman's Guide to Domestic Happiness*, Rosters, London, 1988; first published Thomas Kelly, London, 1834

- Acton, William: *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects, in London and Other Large Cities and Garrison Towns; with Proposals for the Control and Prevention of Its Attendant Evils*, Frank Cass, London, 1972; reprint of John Churchill & Sons, London, 1870, revised edition; first published 1857
- Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen: *Ideas about India*, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., London, 1885
- Chisholm, Caroline: *Emigration and Transportation Relatively Considered; in a Letter dedicated by permission, to Earl Grey*, John Ollivier, London, 1847
- Chisholm, Caroline: *The ABC of Colonization In a Series of Letters. Having Appended a Letter to Lord Ashley, and the Rules of the Family Colonization Loan Society*, John Ollivier, London, 1850
- Cobbe, Frances Power: 'What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?', in (ed.) Susan Hamilton: *"Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors": Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario, 1995; first published in *Fraser's Magazine*, November 1862
- Cobbe, Frances Power: 'Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors', in (ed.) Susan Hamilton: *"Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors": Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario, 1995; first published in *Fraser's Magazine*, December 1868
- Dickens, Charles: (ed. Harry Stone) *Uncollected Writings from Household Words, Vol. I, 1850-1859*, University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 1968
- Eliot, George: 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', in (eds.) Dale Spender and Janet Todd: *Anthology of British Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, Pandora Unwin Hyman, London 1989; first published in *Westminster Review*, October 1856
- Gray, Hester: 'The White Woman's Burden', in *The Common Cause*, 27 November, 1914
- Greg, W.R.: 'Why are Women Redundant?', in *National Review*, 14 April, 1862
- Jameson, Anna Brownell: 'The Milliners', in (ed.) Susan Hamilton: *"Criminals, Idiots Women, and Minors": Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario, 1995; first published in *The Atheneum*, 4.3.1843
- Martineau, Harriet: 'Female Industry', in (ed.) Susan Hamilton: *"Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors": Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario, 1995; first published in *Edinburgh Review*, April 1859
- Mayhew, Henry: *The Morning Chronicle Survey of Labour and the Poor: The Metropolitan Districts, Vol. I*, Caliban Books, Fittlehampton, Sussex, 1980
- Mill, J.S.: *Principles of Political Economy*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1904; first published 1848
- Moore, George: 'A New Censorship of Literature,' in (ed.) Pierre Coustillas: *George Moore: Literature At Nurse, Or Circulating Morals: A Polemic on Victorian Censorship*, Harvester Press, Hassocks, England, 1976; first published in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10.12.1884
- Norton, Caroline: *Caroline Norton's Defense: English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Academy Press, Chicago, 1982; first published 1854
- Oliphant, Margaret: 'The Condition of Women', in (ed.) Susan Hamilton: *"Criminals, Idiots Women, and Minors": Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario, 1995; first published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1858
- Oliphant, Margaret: *William Blackwood and His Sons: The Annals of a Publishing House, I*, Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1897

- Porter, Mrs Gerald: *The Publishing House of Blackwood*, Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1898  
 Reeve, Clara: *The Progress of Romance, I*, W. Keymer, Colchester, 1785  
 Sykes, Frank W.: *With Plumer in Matabeleland: An Account of the Operations of the Matabeleland Relief Force During the Rebellion of 1896*, Archibald Constable & Co., London, 1897  
 Yule, Henry & A.C. Burnell: *Hobson-Jobson: The Anglo-Indian Dictionary*, Wordsworth Editions, Ware, 1996; first published J. Murray, London, 1886

## 2. Published after 1900:

- Abel, Elizabeth, Marianne Hirsch & Elizabeth Langland: *The Voyage in: Fictions of Female Development*, University Press of New England, Dartmouth College, Hanover, 1983  
 Altick, Richard: *The English Common Reader*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957  
 Ambrus, Caroline: *Australian Women Artists: First Fleet to 1945: History, Hearsay, Hersay*, Irrepressible Press, Woden, A.C.T., 1992  
 Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin: *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*, Routledge, London, 1989  
 Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, & Heleln Tiffin: *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Routledge, London, 2000  
 Astbury, Leigh: *City Bushmen: The Heidelberg School and the Rural Mythology*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985  
 Atwood, Margaret: *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1996; first published by Anansi Press, Toronto, 1972  
 Bachelard, Gaston: *The Poetics of Space* (translated by Maria Jolas), Beacon Press, Boston, 1994; first published as *La poétique de l'espace*, Presses Universitaires de France, France, 1958  
 Ballstadt, Carl, Elizabeth Hopkins, & Michael Peterman: *Susanna Moodie: Letters of a Lifetime*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1985  
 Boehmer, Elleke: *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995  
 Bolt, Christine: *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971  
 Bottomore, T.B. & Maximilien Rubel: *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1963  
 Brantlinger, Patrick: *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988  
 Bullen, J.B.: *The Pre-Raphaelites: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998  
 Burton, Antoinette: *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1994  
 Butler, Judith: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, London, 1990  
 Caine, Barbara: *English Feminism 1780-1980*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997  
 Cantrell, Leon (ed.): *Writing of the Eighteen Nineties: Short Stories, Verse, and Essays*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1991  
 Carew Hunt, R.N.: *The Theory and Practice of Communism*, Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1963  
 Carrington, Charles E.: *The British Overseas: Exploits of a Nation of Shopkeepers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968

- Childs, Peter, & Patrick Williams: *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, Longman, Harlow, 1997
- Chrisman, Laura: *Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Schreiner, and Plaatje*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000
- Clayton, Cherry: *Olive Schreiner*, McGraw-Hill, Johannesburg, 1983
- Clayton, Cherry: *Olive Schreiner*, Twayne (Simon & Schuster Macmillan), New York, 1997
- Clow, W.M.: *The Bible Reader's Encyclopaedia and Concordance*, Collins, Glasgow, n.d.
- Coetzee, J.M.: *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988
- Cooley, Charles: *Human Nature and the Social Order*, Scribner, New York, 1902
- Darian-Smith, Kate, Liz Gunner & Sara Nuttall: *Text. Theory, Space: Land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia*, Routledge, London, 1996
- David, Deirdre: *Rule Britannia: Women, Empire, and Victorian Writing*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1995
- Dean, Misao: *A Different Point of View: Sara Jeannette Duncan*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1991
- de Beauvoir, Simone: *The Second Sex*, (translated and edited by H.M. Parshley), Picador Pan, 1988; first published as *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Gallimard, France, 1949
- Dixon, Robert: *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, gender and nation in Anglo-Australian popular fiction, 1875-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995
- Donaldson, Laura E.: *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, and Empire-Building*, Routledge, London, 1992
- Driver, Dorothy: *Pauline Smith*, McGraw-Hill, Johannesburg, 1983
- Eco, Umberto: *A Theory of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1976
- Evans, Eric: *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783-1870*, Longman, Harlow, 1983
- Fanon, Frantz: *The Wretched of the Earth*, (translated by Constance Farrington), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967; first published as *Les damnés de la terre*, by François Maspéro, France, 1961
- First, Ruth & Ann Scott: *Olive Schreiner*, The Women's Press, London, 1989; first published by André Deutsch, London, 1980
- Flint, John: *Cecil Rhodes*, Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1974
- Flint, Kate: *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993
- Frankenberg, Ruth: *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, Routledge, New York, 1993
- Frye, Northrop: *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, Anansi Press, Toronto, 1971
- Galbraith, John S.: *Crown and Charter: The Early Days of the British South Africa Company*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974
- Ghose, Indira: *The Power of the Female Gaze: Women Travellers in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998
- Gilbert, Sandra M. & Susan Gubar: *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1984

- Haines, Robin F.: *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-1860*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1997
- Hammerton, A. James: *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830-1914*, Croom Helm, London, 1979
- Headlam, Cecil: *The Milner Papers: South Africa 1897-1899*, Cassell, London, 1931
- Hobman, D.L.: *Olive Schreiner and her Friends*, Watts & Co., London, 1955
- Horton, Susan R.: *Difficult Women, Artful Lives: Olive Schreiner and Isak Dinesen, In and Out of Africa*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1995
- Hughes, David & Louise Whitford: *Eastern Encounters: Orientalist Painters of the Nineteenth Century*, Fine Art Society London, 1978
- James, Lawrence: *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, Abacus/Little, Brown & Co., London, 1997
- James, Louis: *Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850*, Oxford University Press, London, 1963
- Jeal, Tim: *Baden-Powell*, Hutchinson, London, 1989
- Jones, Alison (ed.): *Dictionary of World Folklore*, Larousse, Edinburgh, 1995
- Klinck, Carl (ed.): *Literary History of Canada, Vols. I & II*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1965
- Krige, Uys: *Olive Schreiner: A Selection*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1968
- La Belle, Jenijoy: *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988
- Lago, Mary & P.N. Furbank (eds.): *Selected Letters of E.M. Forster; Vol. I, 1879-1920*, Collins, London, 1983
- Laurence, Robin: *Beloved Land: The World of Emily Carr*, Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver, 1996
- Ledger, Sally & Scott McCracken (eds.): *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995
- Lerner, Gerda: *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981
- Lerner, Gerda: *Women and History: Vol. I, The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986
- Lerner, Gerda: *Women and History: Vol. II, The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993
- Levine, Philippa: *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Roles and Public Commitment*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1990
- Lorimer, Douglas A.: *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-nineteenth Century*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1978
- Lytton, Constance: *Prison and Prisoners: The Stirring Testimony of a Suffragette*, Virago, London, 1988; first published by William Heinemann, London, 1914
- MacDonald, Robert H.: *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994
- McClintock, Anne: *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Routledge, New York, 1995
- Marsh, Jan: *Pre-Raphaelite Women: Images of Femininity in Pre-Raphaelite Art*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1995
- Midgley, Claire (ed.): *Gender and Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998
- Miller, Jonathan: *On Reflection*, National Gallery Publications, London, 1998

- Miller, Nancy K.: *The Heroine's Text: Readings in the French and English Novel, 1722-1782*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980
- Minh-ha, Trinh T.: *Woman, Native Others: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989
- Moi, Toril: *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, Routledge, London, 1985
- Morris, Donald R.: *The Washing of the Spears: The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1966
- Nead, Linda: *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988
- Nightingale, Florence: 'Cassandra', in Ray Strachey: *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, Virago, London, 1978; first published by G Bell & Sons, London, 1928
- Parkin-Gounelas, Ruth: *Fictions of the Female Self: Charlotte Brontë, Olive Schreiner, Katherine Mansfield*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1991
- Peters, Margot: *Unquiet Soul: A Biography of Charlotte Brontë*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1987
- Petersen, Kirsten Holst & Anna Rutherford (eds.): *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing*, Dangaroo Press, Mundelstrup, 1986
- Poovey, Mary: *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Virago, London, 1989
- Pratt, Mary Louise: *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London, 1992
- Quilligan, Maureen: *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1979
- Rasmussen, R. Kent: *Historical Dictionary of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe*, Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N.J., 1979
- Read, Donald: *England, 1868-1914: The age of urban democracy*, Longman, Harlow, 1979
- Rees, Wyn: *Colenso Letters from Natal*, Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1958
- Rive, Richard (ed.): *Olive Schreiner, Letters, Vol. 1, 1871-1899*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988
- Rotberg, Robert I. (with Miles F. Shore): *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988
- Said, Edward: *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1995; first published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978
- Said, Edward: *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1993
- Schaffer, Kay: *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988
- Schneir, Miriam (ed.): *The Vintage Book of Historical Feminism*, Vintage, London, 1996
- Sharpe, Jenny: *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993
- Shellim, Maurice: *India and the Daniells*, Inchcape, London, 1979
- Showalter, Elaine: *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (revised and expanded edition), Virago, London, 1999; first published by Virago, London, 1978

- Smith, Malvern van Wyk, & Don Maclennan (eds.): *Olive Schreiner and After: Essays on Southern African Literature in Honour of Guy Butler*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1983
- Smith, Sidonie & Julia Watson (eds.): *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty: *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, Routledge, London, 1988
- Stallybrass, Peter & Allon White: *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Methuen, London, 1986
- Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, Susan B. Anthony, & Matilda J. Gage: *The History of Woman Suffrage*, Fowler and Wells, New York, 1881-1922
- Storey, Graham, Kathleen Tillotson, & Nina Burgis: *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Vol VI, 1850-52*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988
- Strachey, Ray: *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, Virago, London, 1978, first published by G. Bell & Sons, London, 1928
- Suleri, Sara: *The Rhetoric of English India*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992
- Summers, Anne: *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Penguin, Ringwood, Australia, 1994; first published by Allen and Lane, Ringwood, Australia, 1975
- Swaishland, Cecillie: *Servants and Gentlewomen to the Golden Land: The Emigration of Single Women from Britain to Southern Africa, 1820-1939*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1993
- Tennant, F.: *The Sources and Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, 1979; first published by University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, 1903
- Thompson, Elizabeth: *The Pioneer Woman: A Canadian Character Type*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1991
- Thompson, James, with David Scott: *The East: imagined, experienced, remembered: Orientalist Nineteenth Century Painting*, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, & National Museums & Galleries on Merside, Liverpool, 1988
- Trumpener, Katie: *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997
- Trustees of the Tate Gallery: *The Pre-Raphaelites*, The Tate Gallery/Penguin, London, 1984
- Tuchman, Gaye (with Nina E. Fortin): *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers, and Social Change*, Routledge, London, 1989
- Twentyman Jones, Leonie: *The Pauline Smith Collection*, University of Cape Town Libraries, Cape Town, 1982
- Urmson, J.O. & Jonathan Rée (eds.): *Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989
- Usherwood, Paul, & Jenny Spencer-Smith: *Lady Butler, Battle Artist 1846-1933*, Alan Sutton, Gloucester, 1987
- Walder, Dennis: *Post-colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1998
- Walkowitz, Judith: *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980
- White, Hayden: *The Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1978

Whitford, Margaret (ed.): *The Irigiray Reader: Luce Irigiray*, Blackwell Oxford, 1991  
Young, Robert: *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Routledge, London, 1990

### 3. Extracts from journals, and individual chapters from books

- Allen, Virginia: "'One Strangling Golden Hair": Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*', in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. LXVI, no. 2, June 1984
- Amos, Valerie and Pratibha Parmar: 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', in *Feminist Review*, No. 17, July 1984
- Anderson, Olive: 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', in *English Historical Review*, 86, 1971
- Ayling, Ronald: 'Literature of the Western Cape from Schreiner to Fugard', in *Ariel*, 16, No. 2, April 1985
- Blumer, Herbert: 'Sociological implications of the thought of George Herbert Mead', in *American Journal of Sociology*, No. 71, 1965-6
- Brantlinger, Patrick: 'Victorians and Africans: the genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent', in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn 1985
- Burton, Antoinette: 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and 'Global Sisterhood,' 1900-1915', in *The Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Fall 1991
- Burton, Antoinette: 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and 'The Indian Woman,' 1865-1915', in (eds.) Nupur Chaudhuri & Margaret Strobel: *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992
- Butcher, Margaret: 'From *Maurice Guest* to *Martha Quest*: The Female *Bildungsroman* in Commonwealth Literature', in *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 21, 2, 1982
- Davidoff, Leonore: 'The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century England', in (ed.) Sandra Burman: *Fit Work for Women*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1979
- Felski, Rita: 'The Novel of Self-Discovery, A Necessary Fiction?', in *Southern Review*, 19, July, 1986
- Gardner, Susan: 'My Brilliant Career: Portrait of the Artist as a Wild Colonial Girl', in (ed.) Carole Ferrier: *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1992
- Gates, Henry Louis: Editor's Introduction, 'Writing "Race" and the Difference it Makes', in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn 1985
- Gilbert, Sandra M.: 'Rider Haggard's Heart of Darkness', in *Partisan Review*, 50:3, 1983
- Gilman, Sander: 'Black Bodies, White Bodies: Towards an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-century Art, Medicine, and Literature', in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn 1985
- Giltrow, Janet: "'Painful Experience in a Distant Land": Mrs Moodie in Canada and Mrs Trollope in America', in *Mosaic*, 14:2, Spring 1981
- Goodman, Charlotte: 'The Lost Brother, The Twin: Women Novelists and the Male-Female Double *Bildungsroman*', in *Novel*, Vol. 17:1, Fall 1983
- Green, G.V.: 'Overturning the Doll's House: A Feminist Comparison', in *Crux*, 17:2, May 1983



- Greer, Germaine: 'Flying Pigs and Double Standards', in *Times Literary Supplement*, 26.7.74
- Haggis, Jane: 'Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism', in *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 13, Nos. 1-2, 1990
- Haggis, Jane: 'White women and colonialism: towards a non-recuperative history', in (ed.) Clare Midgley: *Gender and Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998
- Hall, Donald E.: (ed.): 'Introduction', *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994
- Hillis Miller, J.: 'The Mirror's Secret: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Double Work of Art', in *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 29, no. 4, Winter 1991
- Klaus, Patricia Otto: 'Women in the Mirror: Using Novels to Study Victorian Women', in Kanner Barbara (ed.): *The Women of England: Interpretative Bibliographical Studies*, Mansell, London, 1980
- Kristeva, Julia: 'A Question of Subjectivity', in *Women's Review*, No. 12, October, 1986
- Lenta, Margaret: 'Independence as the Creative Choice in Two South African Fictions', in *Ariel*, 17, No. 1, January 1986
- Lewis, Simon: 'Graves with a View: Atavism and the European History of Africa', in *Ariel*, 27, No. 1, January 1996
- Lorimer, Douglas A.: 'Race, science, and culture: historical continuities and discontinuities, 1850-1914', in (ed.) Shearer West: *The Victorians and Race*, Scholar Press, Aldershot, 1996
- Lucas, Alec: 'The Function of the Sketches in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush*', in (ed.) Lorraine McMullen: *Re(dis)covering our Foremothers*, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 1990
- McDonnell, Jane: 'Austen's Sexual Politics', in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 17, 3, Spring 1984
- Mani, Lata: 'The Production of an Official Discourse on *Sati* in Early Nineteenth-century Bengal', in (eds.) Francis Barker et al: *Europe and Its Others: Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, Vol. 1*, University of Essex Press, Colchester, 1985
- Mani, Lata: 'Contentious Traditions: The Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India', in (eds.) Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid: *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989
- Mays, Kelly J.: 'Reading and Victorian Periodicals', in (eds.) John O. Jordan & Robert L. Patten: *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995
- Mishra, Vijay, & Bob Hodge: 'What is Post(-)colonialism?', in eds. Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman: *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1994
- Moi, Toril: 'Feminist, Female, Feminine', in (eds.) Catherine Belsey & Jane Moore: *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1989
- Mulvey, Laura: 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in (ed.) Constance Penley: *Feminism and Film Theory*, Routledge, London, 1988; first published in *Screen*, 16, 1975

- Mulvey, Laura: 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by *Duel in the Sun*', in (ed.) Constance Penley: *Feminism and Film Theory*, Routledge London, 1988; first published in *Framework*, 6, nos. 15-17
- Nair, Janaki: 'Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813-1940', in *The Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1990
- Nair, Janaki: 'Reconstructing and Reinterpreting the History of Women in India', in *The Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1991
- Nochlin, Linda: 'Lost and Found, Once More the Fallen Woman', in (eds.) Norma Broude & Mary D. Garrard: *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, Harper & Row, New York, 1982
- Offen, Karen: 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', in *Signs*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Autumn 1988
- Olaussen, Maria: 'Jean Rhys's Construction of Blackness as Escape from White Femininity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*', in *Ariel*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 1993
- Parry, Benita: 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', in *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2, 1987
- Paxton, Nancy L.: 'Disembodied Subjects: English Women's Autobiography under the Raj', in (eds.) Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson, *De/colonizing the Subject: the politics of gender in women's autobiography*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1992
- Paxton, Nancy L.: 'Complicity and Resistance in the Writings of Flora Annie Steel and Annie Besant', in (eds.) Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel: *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992
- Peterson, M. Jeanne: 'The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society', in (ed.) Martha Vicinus: *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973
- Pollock, Griselda: 'Woman as sign: psychoanalytic readings', in Pollock: *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art*, Routledge, London, 1988
- Roberts, Helene: 'Marriage, Redundancy or Sin: The Painter's View of Women in the First Twenty-Five Years of Victoria's Reign', in (ed.) Martha Vicinus: *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973
- Rogers, Juliette M.: 'Educating the Heroine: Turn of the Century Feminism and French Women's Education Novels', in *Women's Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1994
- Rose, Jacqueline: 'Sexuality in the Field of Vision', in Rose: *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, Verso, London, 1986
- Rosen, David: 'The volcano and the cathedral: muscular Christianity and the origins of primal manliness', in (ed.) Donald E. Hall: *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994
- Rushdie, Salman: 'Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist', in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*, Granta, London, 1991
- Said, Edward: 'Orientalism Reconsidered', in (eds.) Francis Barker et al: *Europe and Its Others: Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, Vol. I*, University of Essex Press, Colchester, 1985
- Scherzinger, Karen: 'The Problem of the Pure Woman: South African Pastoralism and Female Rites of Passage', in *Unisa*, No. 2, 1991
- Slemon, Stephen: 'Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing', in *Kunapipi*, Vol. IX, No. 3, 1987
- Slemon, Stephen: 'Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History', in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, 1988

- Slemon, Stephen: 'Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World', in *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 30, No.2 (1990)
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty: 'Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle', in *Diacritics*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Winter 1984
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty: 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', in (eds.) Catherine Belsey & Jane Moore: *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1989; first published in *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 1985
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty: 'Imperialism and Sexual Difference', in *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 8, Nos. 1-2, 1986
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty: 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in (eds.) Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin: *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, 1995; first published in (eds.) Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg: *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan, London, 1988
- Visel, Robin: 'Half-Colonization: The Problem of the White Colonial Woman Writer', in *Kunapipi*, Vol. X, No. 3, 1988
- Waxman, Barbara Frey: 'From *Bildungsroman* to *Reifungsroman*: Aging in Doris Lessing's Fiction', in *Soundings*, Vol. 68, No. 3, 1985
- Whitlock, Gillian: 'The Bush, the Barrack-Yard and the Clearing: "Colonial Realism" in the Sketches and Stories of Susanna Moodie, C.L.R. James and Henry Lawson', in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. XX, No. 1, 1985

§§§

**Appendix**

Illustrations

# PAGES MISSING NOT AVAILABLE

Figs H-14-1-6-1-7 1-12 1-17 1-21- 1-24

3-1- 3-2- 4-1

5-1- 5-2- 5-4- 5-8

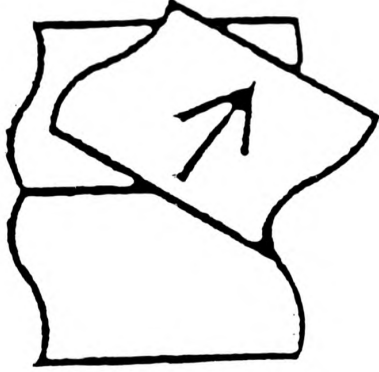




Fig. 1.5 - William Holman Hunt: *The Lady of Shalott*, (1857)



*The River*

Fig. 1.8 - Hablôt K. Browne: *The River*, (1849-50)



Fig. 1.9 - John Everett Millais: *The Bridge of Sighs*, (1858)



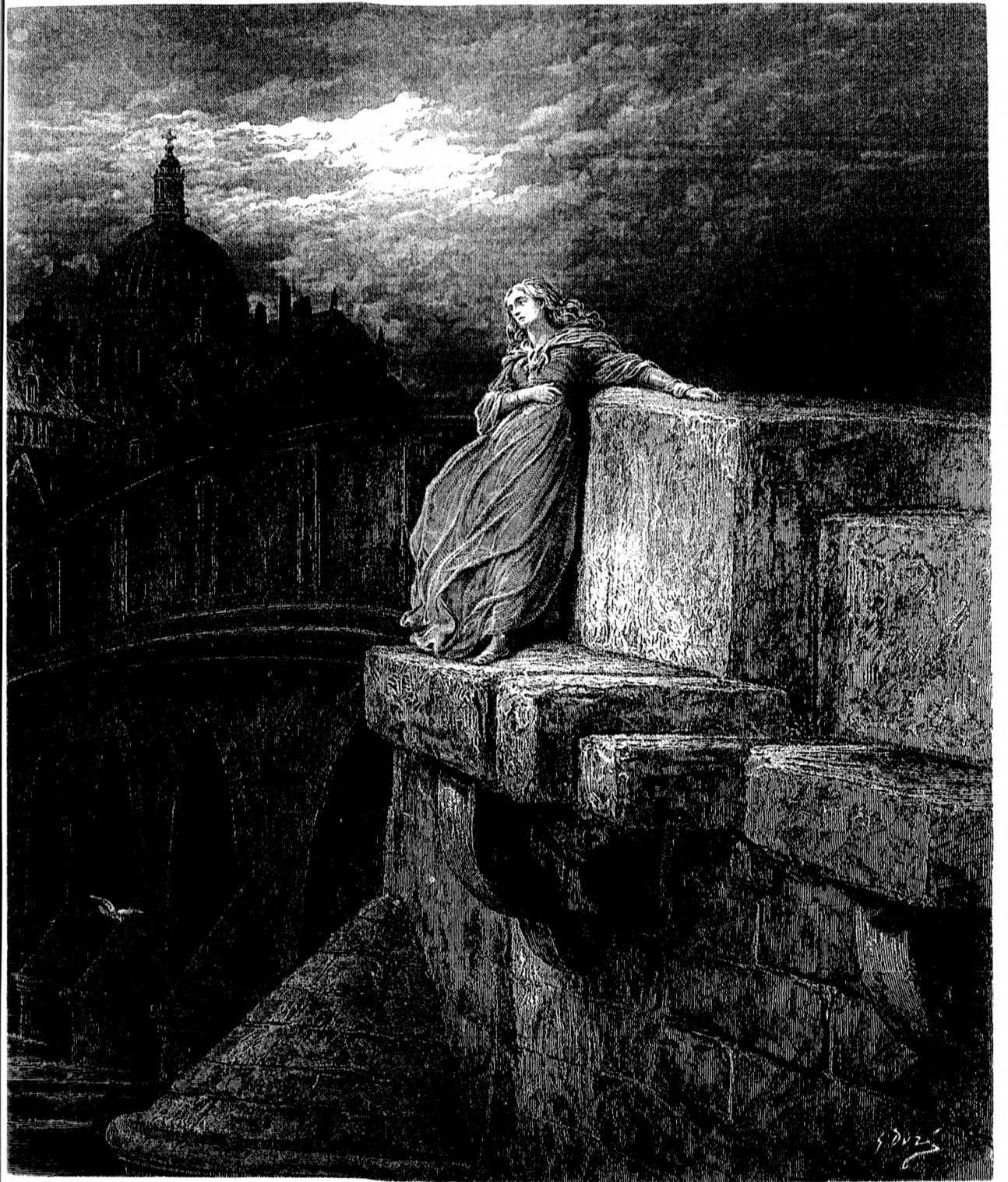


Fig. 1.10 - Gustave Doré: *The Bridge of Sighs*, (1878)

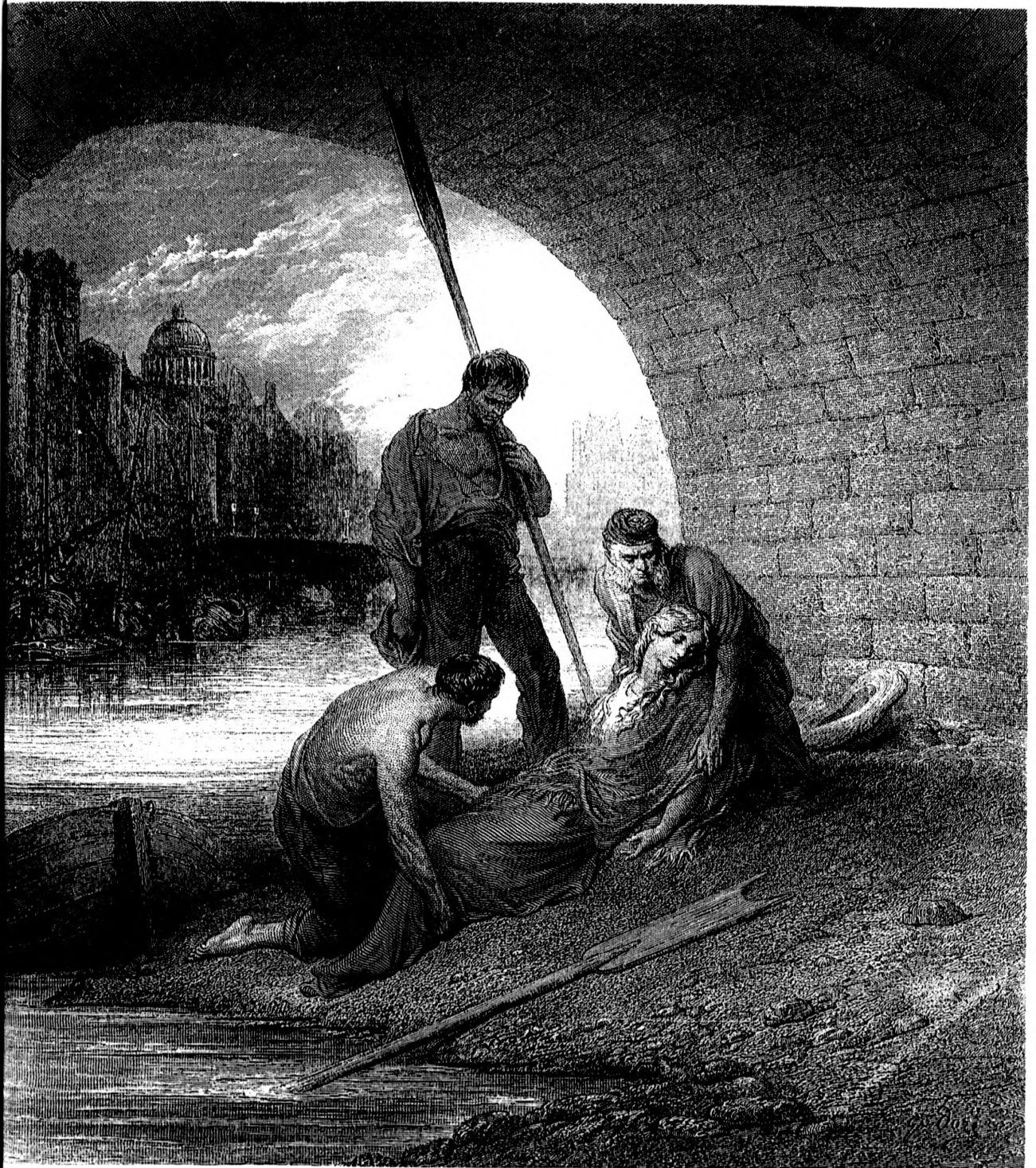


Fig. 1.11 - Gustave Doré: *The Bridge of Sighs*, (1878)



## NEEDLE MONEY.

Fig. 1.18 - 'Needle Money', *Punch*, Vol. XVII, July-December, 1849





## PIN MONEY.

Fig. 1.19 - 'Pin Money', *Punch*, Vol. XVII, July-December, 1849

**The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad.**



Fig. 1.20 - 'The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad', *Punch*, Vol. XVII, January-June, 1850

AT HOME.

ABROAD.

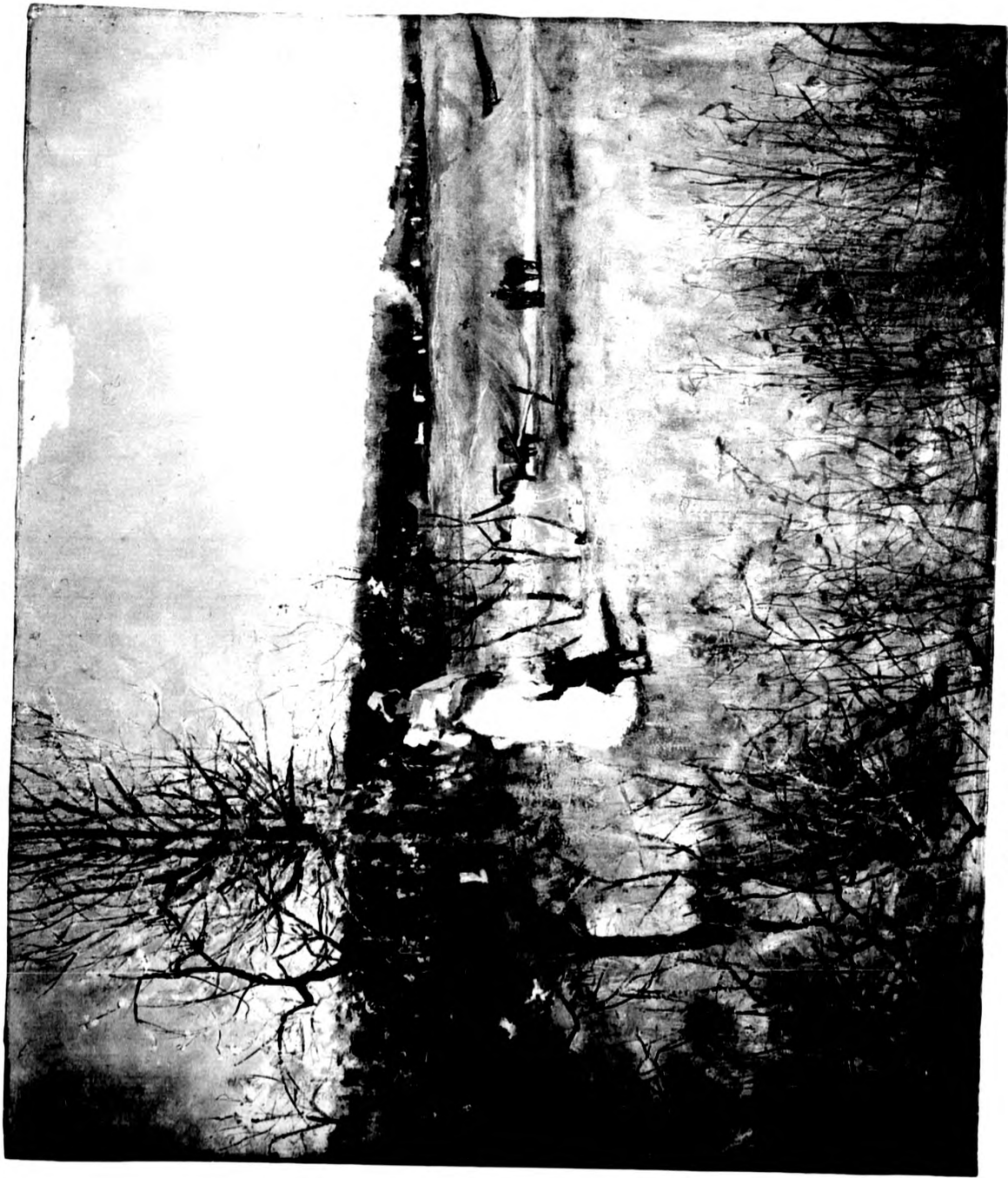


Fig. 3.5 - Charles Conder: *Springtime*, (1888)



Fig. 3.6 - Charles Conder. *Herrick's Blossoms*, (1889)

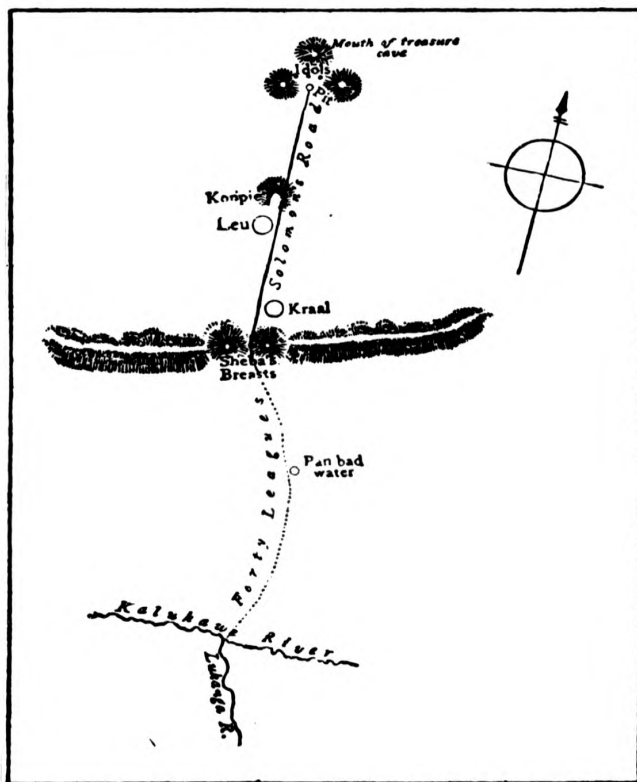


Fig. 4.2 - 'Sketch map of the route to King Solomon's Mines,' (1886)





*(From a photograph)*

Fig. 4.3 - Frontispiece to Olive Schreiner: *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897)



THE POLITICAL TOPSY.

"I 'SPECTS NOBODY CAN'T DO NOTHIN' WITH ME?"—Vide "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*."

Fig. 5.3 - 'The Political Topsy,' *Punch*, Vol. XXIII, July-December, 1852

PUNCH, OR THE LION

WARRIOR - AUGUST 22, 1857.



THE BRITISH LION'S VENGEANCE



ON THE BENGAL TIGER.

Fig. 5.9 - 'The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger', *Punch*, 22 August 1857

RIVARI — AUGUST 29, 1857.



FOR INDIA.

Fig. 5.10 - 'Willing Hands for India', *Punch*, 29 August 1857





JUSTICE.

Fig. 5.11 - 'Justice', *Punch*, 12 September 1857