ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: 'THE NATIVE QUESTION': GENRE, GENDER, AND GOVERNANCE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S WRITING

Justin H. Thompson, Doctor of Philosophy, 2022

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As one of the writers in my project, Olive Schreiner, stated so plainly, "the native question is the real question." What she meant — and what I examine in my dissertation — is that the pressing question for nineteenth-century writers was both the past treatment of Indigenous peoples and the future of settler and imperial states, from Canada to India to Australia and New Zealand. Drawing from insights in post-colonial theory and feminist literary criticism, I argue for reading nineteenth-century Anglophone women's genre writing as inherently political. Though these women were often barred from political debates, I examine the genres in which women cloaked their political philosophy: romance novels, frontier memoirs, travel narratives, and Christian conversion stories. Simultaneously, I consider Indigenous writers to dislocate white writers as the sole narrators of colonialism in the nineteenth century. For example, in one chapter, I consider the Bengali writer and activist Swarnakumari Devi, who is now considered one of the leading women intellectuals of nineteenth-century British India. Her writing, however, was not then and is not now seen as intervening in broader political debates about the future of the Indian

subcontinent. I argue, however, that her novel *The Fatal Garland* advocates a pan-ethnic Indian solidarity as the only political counterweight to British governance. Even contemporary critics often value her more for what she represents than what she actually said. One of my goals in this project is not only to recuperate women writers from historical footnotes into serious subjects of sustained, literary critical study but also to emphasize new modes of understanding history that come into view only by taking into account these little-known and often disregarded works.

‘THE NATIVE QUESTION’: GENRE, GENDER, AND GOVERNANCE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN’S WRITING

by

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Dedication

To my family: Heather, Jason, Luke, and Matthew

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And I want to thank my family. Heather and Jason, you have supported me since the beginning. You have always been the best older sister (and brother in-law). And Luke and Matthew, you have such bright lives ahead of you. I hope you can be proud of your uncle.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Women Writing the Empire

> "Letters upon the unhappy Maori war have been purposely omitted."
> Charlotte Mary Yonge, *Life of John Coleridge Patteson: Missionary Bishop of the Melanesian Islands, Vol. I*

The wager of this project is that genre is the key frame for understanding the pressures on nineteenth-century women writers and women's writing to conform to Victorian notions of propriety and to align with the separate-sphere ideology. Combining formalist and historicist frameworks indebted to nineteenth-century, feminist, Indigenous, and post-colonial scholars, I argue that women's writing was restricted by historically situated genres, but that women writers stretched and adapted genres traditionally seen as feminine — or, at least, as non-literary — to stage the violent encounters between colonizer and colonized that undergirded the expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. As one of the writers in my project, Olive Schreiner, stated so plainly, "the native question is the real question." What she meant — and what I examine in my dissertation — is that the pressing question for nineteenth-century writers was both the past treatment of Indigenous peoples and the future of settler and imperial states, from Canada to India to Australia and New Zealand. This dissertation examines the genres women writers manipulated to register these conflicts between Indigenous and colonizer and how these generic constraints both enabled and limited women's ability to participate in political debates about the future of the British Empire.

In the introduction to their edited collection, *Worlding the South*, Sarah Comyn and Porscha Fermanis survey the field of nineteenth-century historical and literary studies, with a clear eye toward the multiplicity and varied nature of a field that loosely holds itself together. They name their chapters "gestures towards the various literary cultures of the southern colonies

while nonetheless seeing both colony and nation as emergent, permeable, and hybrid" (2). Comyn and Fermanis propose a commendable and necessary methodology that resists retotalizing frameworks that might call themselves Global Anglophone studies but seek to reassert the primacy of the Empire as a heuristic. This dissertation is similarly invested in a comparatist methodology that, to use Comyn and Fermanis's phrase, "gestures toward" a more global, more interactive framing of nineteenth-century literature.

I came to this project, to nineteenth-century studies more generally, somewhat reluctantly. I had imbibed the slights of the Modernists: Victorian literature seemed dense and impersonal, simultaneously sentimental and cold, tediously provincial but also overly sweeping and totalizing. I entered graduate school hoping to engage with post-colonial literature and critique. My writing sample was about the Nigerian writer Ben Okri, and how a petroleum boom and inflation could be depicted in literature. It was fortuitous, then, that my first two courses of graduate school, scheduled back-to-back, were "Readings in Victorian Literature" with Jason Rudy and "Post-Colonial Readings" with Sangeeta Ray. It feels too facile to say that this project combines these interests and, certainly, this project is dominated by nineteenth-century writers and nineteenth-century scholars. Yet, the concerns of post-colonial critique have also found their way into nineteenth-century studies, profoundly reshaping the field we still often name in honor of a Queen who crowned herself Empress of India.

In its earliest inception, this project was designed to interrogate the role of violence in women's writing. How did women writers, who had few if any material roles in the British military or in the political apparatus by which the military was governed, write about the extraordinary violence of the nineteenth century? As I wrote, however, my questions changed. Violence cannot be divorced from its context or its history. Violence is dispossession and death,

cultural genocide, forced relocation, kidnapping, disease, neglect, assimilation, erasure. But that violence is often abstracted, transforming the corpses of Indigenous peoples into statistics, or in charts, graphs, or, as Elleke Boehmer describes, color-coded maps with "the world map flushed pink" (13). As Nathan Hensley writes, the violence of the "the Victorian state's structurally unfinishable war" against Indigenous peoples, independence factions, and other military and political adversaries across the globe "is best understood not as one topic within the broader field of Victorian studies, but as the general fact subtending the entirety of domestic life and therefore cultural production in the period" (6). In other words, the archive of imperial violence is nearly limitless and, yet, the field of nineteenth-century studies is still reckoning with questions about the objects of that imperial violence. One of the goals of this project, then, is to consider women writers, including Anglo settler-colonist, Indigenous, and South Asian women writers as subjects worthy of close, critical attention and to value the stories that these women writers were able to tell. As the editors of *The Empire Writes Back* articulate, the establishment of English study also established "[a] 'privileging norm' … at the heart of the formation of English Studies as a template for the denial of the value of the 'peripheral', the 'marginal', the 'uncanonized'" (3). It is these very texts, particularly those written in so-called "feminized" genres in which this project is invested.

Feminist critics have worked to disrupt the separate sphere ideology, though as Tricia Lootens argues in *Political Poetess* (2017), countering the separate sphere model "should, surely, no longer be necessary," adding, "Nonetheless … it still is" (40). Like Lootens, I do not take the separate spheres as natural, but rather, for my project, as formal and informal rules about access to publishing and historical and contemporary critical reception that was often a question of genre. Lootens artfully summarizes her method of interrogating this legacy, writing:

> Suspend separate spheres! Arrest their imaginary movements, to begin with -- and while they stand thus frozen, momentarily cordoned off from "common sense," begin asking: how big are "Victorian separate spheres"? Are they both the same size? How, precisely, are they shaped? What separates them, and how? (12-13)

To this I would add, in a question that has come to shape this project, how did these spheres *move*? Boehmer posits, in the introduction to the anthology *Empire Writing*, that women "were in almost all cases differently positioned relative to colonial power on the basis of their gender" (xxvii). She then asks, "Can such women then be heard to speak with a different voice?" (xxvii). In what shapes, what genres, did the mores of gender find expression in nineteenth-century colonial and imperial spaces, particularly when one considers that "[c]olonial rule was exercised in proximity to the native, within sight of the compound, the market-place, the burial ground" (Boehmer xxiv). In such a view of colonialism and imperialism, women might be seen to have a privileged access to tell these stories.

Colonial literature, itself, remains understudied. Much of it, according to Rudy, "has historically been understood as second-rate, leaving a vast and diverse body of colonial literature largely unexamined, generally misunderstood, and absent from historical account" (4). Too much of the scholarship that has centralized colonial literature has, predictably, folded colonial literature into nationalist canons, inserting a *telos* atop, as Tamara Wagner describes, "the divergent ways in which emigration and settlement were not just perceived at the time, but also how they were worked into narrative" (7). I follow Rebecca Swartz, who argues, in her *Education and Empire*, for "situate[ing] local cases within their global context, showing how this elucidates the particularity of the local and the connections to the global" (13). She adds that comparisons between colonial sites and broader trends "should be used to provide a way to think

about the unique textures of colonialism, taking seriously the ever-present imperial in the local" (14). Or, as the Canadian writer Susie Frances Harrison, aka Seranus (1859-1935), wrote in her *Crowded Out! And Other Sketches* (1886), "there is no country, no town, no village, as there is no nation, no class of society, nor individual existence, that has not its own deep and peculiar significance, its own unique and personal characteristics that distinguish it from the rest of the world" (3). It is a methodology akin to Rudy's definition of "historical poetics," or "a set of methodologies that attend to the situatedness of poetic meaning: the relationship between a poem's readerly contexts and its meaning" (6).

My project shares similar formal and political concerns as recent work by Rudy, Lootens, Philip Steer (2020), Tony Ballantyne (2014), Manu Chander (2017), Kevin Hutchings (2020), Christopher Taylor (2018), Lucy Hartley (2018), Comyn and Fermanis (2021) and a recent cluster of essays called "Undisciplining Victorian Studies." I also turn to Indigenous scholars as part of a growing movement to recognize the importance of Indigeneity in thinking through the material and discursive implications of the nineteenth-century British Empire. My intervention, then, is to extend these frameworks to genres of women's writing, which, as Éadaoin Agnew characterizes, "were seen as an adjunct to masculine imperial narratives" in the first half of the nineteenth century. My archive comprises often understudied women's writing that I situate by genre and geography. And while critics have traced the "the sheer versatility and accessibility" of women's life writing, I look specifically to writing produced in colonial and imperial spaces. As Lorenzo Servitje helpfully summarizes, building from Hensley and others, "Violence was not an exception to liberal modernity but rather the premise, a contradiction negotiated through the expanded possibilities of literary form" (17). It is precisely those "expanded possibilities" that intrigued me, particularly the role of women writers and genre writing in the management,

subversion, legitimation, and interrogation of the nineteenth-century British Empire. In brief, I ask how nineteenth-century women writers answered the 'native question.'

In the coda to his recent collection of essays, Duncan Bell argues that future work on imperial and, in particular, settler-colonial studies needs to more fully "address the gendered character of colonial discourse" (368). Gender-neutral explorations of colonial and imperial literature tend to reproduce masculinist and gendered taxonomies. As Sangeeta Ray condenses, **"**every aspect of our socio-political reality is gendered, and the presumption of a gender-neutral methodology perpetuates the fiction of a transgendered universality that is nothing but a euphemism for a universal masculinity" (4). This project asks how women writers adapted, subverted, stretched, and repurposed so-called "feminine" genres of writing in order to intervene in debates about colonial governance, the role of women, and the imperial relationship to Indigeneity. What I find, and what "The Native Question" proposes, then, is a heuristic for reading these works, rather than a totalizing narrative of nineteenth-century women's writing.

Some writers, such as the abolitionist and activist Mary Ann Shadd (1823-1893), ignore the question. In her groundbreaking *A Plea for Emigration* (1852), in which she urges African-Americans to move to Canada, she describes "British America" as "a country equal in extent, at least, to the United States, extending on the north to the Arctic Ocean, from the Atlantic on the east, to the Pacific on the west" with a southern border coterminous with "the inequalities in latitude of the several Northern States and Territories belonging to the United States government" (21). In 1852, this simply was not true of British possessions in North America. Shadd's construction of Canada is meant as a liberated mirror to the United States, but in doing so, she erases the hundreds of thousands of First Nations people and assumes an inevitability in the manifest destiny rhetoric of Westward expansion.

While Edward Said taught us to read for empire in the margins of the canon, I want to extend his method into those texts left off canon lists. Thus, while critics, such as Gilbert and Gubar, in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), have read *Jane Eyre*, and the character of Bertha Mason, to discuss racialized patriarchy in the nineteenth century, I ask how such an analysis might apply to a forgotten diary from a colonial woman or a novel first published in Bengali. Gayatri Spivak, in "Three Women's Texts" (1985), powerfully critiques Gilbert and Gubar for the way their analysis evacuates Bertha Mason into the dark "avatar" that Jane "annihilated" to confirm her own subject status as white woman. Spivak asks us to move beyond criticism that "reproduces the axioms of imperialism," looking to Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a way to complicate the earlier psychoanalytic reading and rescue Mason's humanity. Spivak's criticism foregrounds the "worlding" of the "Third World." I want to look at texts that do the work of "worlding" without moving to a post-colonial moment. It is in this vein, that I turn specifically to works written *in* and *about* the colonies and foreground work by women. These works from the colonial sphere can nuance and complicate the "worlding" found in literary works written in the metropole.

And though this project aims to recuperate lost voices, I recognize the limitation of such a practice. In her groundbreaking essay, "The Rani of Sirmur," Gayatri Spivak asks us to consider "[a]s the historical record is made up, who is dropped out, when, and why?" (270). Spivak ends her essay with a warning: that the violent erasure of colonized peoples can and does occur with "[t]he greatest personal goodwill of the unwitting benevolent imperialist" (271). If Edward Said brought a contrapuntal reading to canonical British writing and foregrounded the necessity of 'reading' Empire in these works, then it is Spivak and subsequent postcolonial scholars who have emphasized the impossibility of recuperating voices that an imperial archive never meant to

survive. Still, this project is animated by the calls by postcolonial scholars such as Priyamvada Gopal, who implores scholars to "explore[] the possibility that Britain's enslaved and colonial subjects were not merely victims … but rather agents whose resistance not only contributed to their own liberation but also … reshaped some British ideas about freedom and who could be free?" (5).

Making sweeping and definitive claims about women's writing risks reproducing the kind of essentialist rhetoric that critics have spent decades deconstructing. Thus, we hedge. We specify, we quibble. The historian Antoinette Burton cautions that while "making women and their histories visible (again) has been one of the founding acts of women's history and feminist history, simply recovering the Western feminist imperial past is not sufficient" (23). Or, as Tricia Lootens asks so powerfully, referencing a feminist critical argument inspired by Virginia Woolf, "You want to save the next Judith Shakespeare? Fine. What about the next Phillis Wheatley?" (22). Though Rosalind Miles could argue in 1987 that, "When we say 'women writers,' … the phrase is generally taken to mean 'women novelists,'" there has been a tremendous interest in women's writing in the past few decades. Women's travel writing, in particular, has received close critical attention. For Angela Jones, "the travelogue form" allowed a writer like Mary Wollstonecraft "to roam philosophically as much as she does literally, all the while blurring boundaries between personal and descriptive modes" (209). This argument, implicitly, also suggests that women's writing could be "freed" by particular genres, specifically those that empowered women to comment on their position in colonial and imperial spaces while adhering to Victorian suppositions about propriety.

Yet, this project does not aim to provide *the* story of the British Empire, but rather *a* story, a story made possible, afforded, by the relationship of women writers to genre. In that

way, what connects these writers is not who they were, their subject position or identity, but the work that their texts do. At the beginning of this project, I aimed to recuperate those voices who actively wrote anti-racist or anti-imperialist texts, or whose writings made possible and made space for reparative readings in our arguably postcolonial present. In retrospect, it is clear now that this was a task was always doomed to fail. Instead, it the very compromised nature of the writers and the writing and how those compromises are worked out through genre that is the provenance of this project. In other words, this project aims to ask what stories and what modes of storytelling were enabled by women's relationship to empire.

Much of my thinking about genre in this project builds from John Frow's excellent *Genre*. As he articulates in the introduction, "genres are not fixed and pre-given forms by thinking about texts as performances of genre rather than reproductions of a class to which they belong" (3). It is a markedly different interpretation that one might have read decades previous, such as when Rosalind Coward, in the collection *The New Feminist Criticism*, argues that, in fiction at least, "there are very definite genres, practices which are internal to the text and backed up by institutions of marketing," such as "romance, the detective novel, science fiction, which determine to a large extent *how* a text is read" (226, emphasis in original). The idea that genres are merely attempts to situate texts has helped me consider both my own place in the field of Victorian or nineteenth-century studies and the place of the field itself, particularly in light of the introduction to a recent special issue of *Victorian Studies* from Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong. Frow's recognition of the indeterminacy, the impossibility of exactness in any scholarly taxonomy feels fitting and seems to pair well with Chatterjee et al's questioning of the future of the field. Or, as Raymond Williams argues**,** genres are a conversation, both between the retroactive classifications of past works and between competing

strands of taxonomization: "by literary form, by subject-matter, and by intended readership" (182).

Frow and others have argued persuasively that genre is inherently tied to power. “Genres actively generate and shape knowledge of the world,” Frow writes, adding “generically shaped knowledges are bound up with the exercise of power, where power is understood as being exercised in discourse, as well as elsewhere, but is never simply external to discourse” (2). Genre and generic expectations continue to govern much critical and popular response to literature, film, and other media. When the film *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* was released in 2016, the Tina Fey vehicle about a morally torn war correspondent in Afghanistan, it received some rather harsh reviews. Based on the memoirs of Kim Barker, a correspondent who covered Afghanistan and Pakistan during the early days of the Afghanistan invasion, critics mostly praised the acting but seemed perplexed – bothered even – by the *genre* of the film. One mused, “Is it a comedy, a drama, a dramedy, a comma … WTF is ‘WTF’?”[1] David Sims, in *The Atlantic*, wrote, “*Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* is, oddly enough, a rom-com” in which Fey’s true love “is war itself.”[2] The presumption is that there are right and wrong ways to represent violence, right and wrong genres in which to tell stories of imperial aggression. The implicit charge against the film is that romance or romantic comedies – two specifically feminized genres – are inappropriate venues to discuss the war. Such criticisms aren’t new, however; they simply repeat the kind of distinctions that John Ruskin made in 1865 when he wrote, “the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,—

[1] Peterson, Aaron B. “Whiskey Tango Foxtrot Review.” *The Hollywood Outsider*. 4 March 2016.
[2] Sims, David. “*Whiskey Tango Foxtrot:* The Soft Bigotry of No Expectations.” *The Atlantic*. 4 March 2016.

and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision" (25).

This is a formal project as much as a historicist one. As Hensley writes, building from recent work by Caroline Levine (2017) and others, "I conceive 'form' as an enabling constraint while emphasizing the productivity, not the restriction, of that dual understanding" (18). Genres, then, are sites of negotiation, between writer and reader, yes, but also between conformity and possibility, between the often apolitical surface of women's writing and the deeply political and imperially imbricated depths. To achieve these readings, I also follow Lootens, who both clearly articulates the stakes of historically informed close readings and its methodology. "I linger, over and over, on the details of such verse, framing readings intensified, at points, by the sort of rigorously chronological analysis with which this project began" (2). And like Lootens, my interest is in those works often derided or dismissed as non-literary, a binary that Nancy Armstrong identified as being "imposed retrospectively by the modern literary institution" (9).

I situate my project at the intersection of New Empire studies, postcolonial scholarship, and Indigenous studies, arguing for a historically informed formalist reading of nineteenth-century women's writing. What were the generic limitations for women writers, and how did women subvert these generic expectations to make their political voices heard? I do not take gender as a coherent social construct throughout the nineteenth century, but rather as a site of contestation. Rather, what ties together the writers in my dissertation is their inability to directly engage in politics, whether through speech or other direct action. Consequently, they turned to other genres, such as romance novels, Christian conversion narratives, and women's emigration guides. My methodology dislodges Eurocentric narratives of imperialism and nationalism through feminist recovery work and by putting writers across the British Empire in conversation.

Though it would be reductive to claim any central literary or historical feature of all the works I consider, there are patterns, some thematic and some formal. I have tried to pair authors in a way that shows the slippages in these patterns, in ways that disrupt easy or traditional understandings of genre or gender. I look for the "divisions within genres" that Paula Rabinowitz argues "point to the fissures within ideology and history and open space for theoretical intervention" (69). I begin in the 1830s, a decade of intensification of settlement across the Anglophone world. It was also the year that the Royal Mail introduced the penny black stamp, which, for the first time, standardized the cost for mailing letters. With this simplification, the number of letters soared from 76 million in 1839 to more than 400 million in 1853.[3] These decades cover what has come to be known as "high imperialism," roughly 1870-1918, the era of a "more officially expansionist, assertive, and self-conscious approach to empire" (Boehmer xv). I start my project earlier in order to better capture the *development* of "high imperialism" from the women writing on the frontier. I end in the early decades of the twentieth century as some of these former colonies became independent and, as Rudy shows, their writing often become more nationalistic in tone.

I chose these texts and these locations to highlight the work of genre. In Canada, for instance, the colonial guides I discuss have become foundational texts of Canadian identity, though they are typically read for their historiographic content, for the flavor and texture of early Anglo-Canadian frontier life rather than as attempts to intervene in a trans-Atlantic discourse about the future of settlement. Similarly, though the conversion narratives in my chapter about South Africa are imagined, missionaries were a powerful force in nineteenth-century South Africa. Throughout this project, I have juxtaposed texts in chapters and the chapters themselves

[3] Barton, David and Nigel Hall. *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*. John Benjamins Publishing, 2000, pp. 88.

to provide a more accurate picture of the unevenness, the messiness of the nineteenth-century British Empire and women's relationship to power. To borrow phrasing from Comyn and Fermanis, these juxtapositions are meant to "illuminat[e] complex sets of historical and cultural relationships or correspondences, including shared histories of estrangement, violence, indenture and unfree labour" (3). More specifically, these comparisons allow for a more nuanced investigation of gender, which I view as a product of ongoing power relations, and that category's relationship to genre.

Likewise, I have juxtaposed settler-colonial spaces with imperial spaces to capture the asymmetry of the empire more fully. It is tempting to cleanly separate areas of the British Empire by types of settlement or levels of administrative control. And while such taxonomies have use, I argue that, discursively, these boundaries were not as clear to nineteenth-century writers. Similary, as Bill Ashcroft et al articulated in their foundational *The Empire Writes Back*, explaining why they used "post-colonial" to describe countries from Australia and Canada to Malaysia, Malta, Pakistan, and Singapore: "there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression" (2).

As Ballantyne and Lachy Paterson articulate, fully understanding the relationship between Indigeneity and the British Empire requires a comparative methodology:

> Deeply and fundamentally, 'native' and 'indigenous' are relational social categories. They are historically contingent .... These identifications were and are produced as a consequence of cross-cultural debates, incorporation into imperial regimes, the experience of colonial power, and engagements with the developing authority of national sovereignties. (2)

The groups to which I use "Indigenous" to refer are various: First Nations, Inuits, and Metis in Canada, Bantu people in South Africa, Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders, and, in Malay, Dyaks, Malays, and Chinese immigrants. I use the term not to argue for an essentialism that flattens or erases cultural and ethnic specificity, but to acknowledge the power dynamics inherent to my study. My archive of women writers in the colonies emphasizes the ambiguity of the position that white women held (and still hold) in imperial states. The legacies of settler colonialism and of imperialism more broadly still reverberate across the world. Many of the areas in my study – South Africa, Australia, Malaysia, Canada – are still reckoning not only with past violence but with ongoing structural and systemic discrimination against indigenous peoples and people of color.

The writers I discuss were not unaware of their rhetorical limitations, however. In my first chapter, "Discredible Witnessing," I show that women writers rhetorically disavowed their imperial or political positions in order to substantiate themselves as imperial witnesses. I use the British missionary Henriette McDougall and her *Letters from Sarawak: Addressed to a Child* (1854) as an emblematic text while also considering writing from a wide swath of imperial and colonial spaces. McDougall and her husband traveled to Sarawak — a former independent kingdom ruled by an ex-East India Company officer — to establish a mission in the 1830s. While there, she wrote a series of letters, supposedly addressed to the small child she left with family in England. McDougall frames herself foremost as a mother to avoid being seen as overtly political, even while she argued forcefully both for the continued missionary presence and for the eventual annexation of Sarawak into the British Empire. Building on scholarship that has shown how liberal humanism has often functioned as a guise for imperial expansion, I argue here for a formal and rhetorical reading of these texts. For instance, many of the white women

writers obfuscated state violence behind the passive voice while switching to the active voice to depict Indigenous, anti-imperial violence, a trend that trend extends from McDougall's writing in Malaysia to the Australian and Canadian poets, among others. This chapter underscores white women's complicity in the violence of empire and draws attention to how writers attempted to hide that complicity.

The next three chapters are structed as test cases, as I examine specific genres in their socio-historical context. In my second chapter, "Silent and Silenced," I argue that white women's investment in Indigenous knowledge was tied to imperialist ambitions. Turning to Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill, I argue that their sympathetic depictions of First Nations in *Roughing It in the Bush* (1854) and *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) must be seen in the context of their families' precarity and the genre in which they wrote. The sisters wrote now canonical settler-imperial guidebooks, in which they advise future settlers of British North America about the myriad dangers of attempting to settle the "backwoods" of Canada. I foreground a generic and materialist reading of these texts, noting that the sisters' sympathies are associated with Indigenous acts of kindness that, quite literally, kept the Moodies and the Traills from starving. That these sympathies are inconsistent or are refracted through nostalgia for the Romanticized "noble savage" in their later writings emphasizes the fleeting nature of Moodie and Traill's fellow feeling. Similarly, these sympathies appear in guidebooks, which, I argue, renders the relationship between white settlers and First Nations peoples as transactional. To complicate my reading, I then turn to the Indigenous writer Bamewawagezhikaquay, or Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, a contemporary of Moodie and Traill, who translated Ojibwe stories and published poetry in *The Literary Voyager* or *Muzzeniegun* (1826-7). Schoolcraft's writing

illuminates what true cultural curiosity can produce and points us toward a more ethical relationship to First Nations history.

In my third chapter, "Dreaming India's Future: The Romance and State Formation," I pair Flora Annie Steel's romantic interpretation of the 1857 Rebellion, *On the Face of the Waters* (1897), with the Bengali writer and activist Swarnakumari Devi's novel, *The Fatal Garland* (1915). While Devi is now considered one of the leading women intellectuals of nineteenth-century British India, her writing is no longer seen as intervening in the same debates that white women writers staged when re-narrating the Indian Rebellion. I argue that her novel proposes a pan-ethnic Indian solidarity as a coalition against British imperial control. Reviews of Devi's novel ignored this political lens, and even contemporary critics often value her more for what she represents than what she actually said. I examine how both writers *perform* romance in the text, to different political ends and working from different literary traditions. This juxtaposition allows for a fuller rendering of the Indian intellectual response to the violence of 1857 and the ensuing decades of British censorship.

In my final chapter, "The Lives of Trooper Peter," I turn to the Christian conversion narrative. I argue that Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897), often noted as a searing indictment of imperial expansion in South Africa, is limited in its critique by Schreiner's choice of genre. By pairing it with the answer novel it provoked, Catherine Radziwiłł's *The Resurrection of Peter: A Reply to Olive Schreiner* (1900), I am able to pinpoint its critical constraints. Thus, while I commend Schreiner's anti-racist writings later in her life, I focus here on the question of the conversion genre, which, I argue, inherently foregrounds white settlers, even as the work of missionaries in the region was to convert the Indigenous Africans. By exploring this gap in the imaginative work of conversion, I show how Schreiner's intellectual

efforts are still built on the racist political theories that distinguish between levels of civilizational and technological advancement.

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Chapter 1: Discredible Witnessing and Imperial Violence

"These 'thoughts' … are, I wish distinctly to state, *only* Thoughts. They do not pretend to solve any problems, to lay down any laws, to decide out of one's life experience and within the limits of one volume, any of those great questions which have puzzled generations, and will probably puzzle generations more."
Dinah Craik, *A Woman's Thoughts about Women* (1858)

The first question many nineteenth-century women writers had to answer in their texts — whether in travel writing, biographies, histories, novels, plays — was *why*. Why were they writing? Why should they be considered reliable? What constitutes their expertise and, often as important, the exigency of their work? These questions were implicit and, yet, we find these rhetorical moves — or, in Mary Poovey's words, "strategies of indirection and accommodation" (xi) — in prefaces and author's notes across women's texts in the nineteenth century. For example, Mary Anne Barker (1831-1911) opens the preface to *Station Life in New Zealand* (1872) with a familiar tone of apology. "These letters, their writer is aware, justly incur the reproach of egotism and triviality" (vii). She then launches into the first letter *in media res*, as it were, writing, "….Now I must give you an account of our voyage" (1; ellipsis in original). This implied familiarity and the ellipsis suggest that Barker is merely continuing a conversation. In other words, Barker's tone suggests she is answering a previous letter, portraying herself as the passive recipient of questions about the colony in New Zealand.[4] Even a writer as famous as Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), on the occasion of her 1863 *Notes on Hospitals*, writes that "I have been asked to prepare the present edition. In doing this, it has been necessary to rewrite nearly the whole of it, and to make so many additions to the matter that it is in reality a new

[4] Anna Boswell characterizes Barker's text as "by no means a story of easy progress …. Barker's infant son dies; Barker and her husband lose half their sheep flock to a snowstorm and face starvation and hypothermia; she is thrown from her horse and must her own broken shoulder" (36).

book" (iv). Nightingale, by this time, had achieved international fame, but she still frames her writing as responding to the concerns of the public, rather than stemming from personal desire or as a recognition of her own expertise.[5]

There were other strategies available to women, such as framing their writing as maternal or the result of maternal obligations.[6] Mary Seacole (1805-81) famously describes her desire to work at Nightingale's hospitals in the Crimea as "the offer of a motherly yellow woman to go to the Crimea and nurse her 'sons' there suffering from cholera, diarrhœa, and a host of lesser ills" (64).[7] The pattern extends across genres, as well. Thus, in a primer on ancient Roman legends from 1878, the writer Emily Beesly blames a lack of proper material for her children as the motivation for "the experiment" of her own writing (v). She adds, "The writer of this little book was not satisfied that her children should hear nothing but fairy tales and the story of nursery life" (v). She was simply doing her duty as a mother. Similarly, as Linda K. Hughes notes, if women writers "wanted to be featured under signature in periodicals … or stocked in bookshops and in Mudie's Circulating Library," they "needed to have a spotless reputation" (57). Hughes adds, "hence the usefulness of incorporating 'Mrs.' into an authorial signature" (57): Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Frances Trollope, Mrs. Humphry Ward.

Even writing about feminine spaces or feminine work did not alleviate women writers from their prefatory notes of apology. Valerie Sanders notes that "Every advice book and domestic manual since Hannah More reminds young women that their demeanor in the family

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[5] Harriet Martineau similarly frames her *Household Education* (1848).

[6] Other women writers could claim more pressing or more material reasons to publish. The Canadian poet Annie Louisa Walker (1836-1907) was prompted to publish a new edition of her poetry in 1890 after traveling to London and finding one of her poems in a book of hymns "slightly altered, set to a tune which is not, certainly, strikingly beautiful, and attributed to somebody I never heard of" (viii).

[7] As Nicole Fluhr has argued, this maternal framing also obscured that Seacole brought her daughter with her to the Crimea. For more, see Fluhr's "'Their Calling Me 'Mother' Was Not, I Think, Altogether Unmeaning': Mary Seacole's Maternal Personae" (2006).

should be modest and submissive, self-sacrificing and gentle" (7). Sarah Stickney (1799-1872) opens her *The Women of England, Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits* (1839) with the clunky, "I feel that some apology is necessary for the presumption of inviting the attention of the public to a work, in which I have been compelled to enter into the apparently insignificant detail of familiar and ordinary life" (1). She adds, "while our libraries are stored with books of excellent advice on general conduct, we have no single work containing the particular minutiæ of practical duty, to which I have felt myself called upon to invite the consideration of the young women of the present day" (1-2). Stickney's book is assuredly in the feminine sphere, yet she still apologizes for its publication and, like Nightingale and others, decenters any sense of aspiration. Or, in a slight variation on a theme, women writers framed their writing as letters to family members. In her much-lauded travelogue, *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (1883), Isabella Bird (1831-1904) opens the preface "under the heavy shadow of the loss of the beloved and only sister to whom the letters of which it consists were written" (v). Bird's *Englishwoman in America* (1856) and *The Hawaiian Archipelago* (1876), among others, had already been published.[8] In the latter, she explains that she was both "urged" by friends to "publish my impressions and experiences" and that the "letters which follow were written to a near relative" (*Archipelago* ix-x).

Other women writers could deploy their inability to partake in more direct political action as proof of their credibility as a writer. The Australian writer and activist Catherine Helen Spence (1825-1910), for example, begins her 1861 *A Plea for Pure Democracy: Mr. Hare's Reform Bill Applied to South Australia* by noting, "A looker-on sometimes sees more of the

[8] Bird mocks the utility of the preface in *Englishwoman in America,* commenting that "a general dislike of prefaces is unmistakeably evidenced by their uncut leaves" (1).

game than the players, and as I have never been mixed up with the turmoil of elections, I can, perhaps, see more dispassionately than those who have, the defects of our present system and the cure for them" (iii). It would be foolish to classify Spence's pamphlet as apolitical — the genre itself is closely tied to politics — but it is notable that Spence still employs some of the recognizable tools of what I call *discredible witnessing*: a move in which women writers disavow their position in the empire or in political spaces in order to cloak their political writing in a genre seen as feminine. Though Spence was, by the early 1860s, a reporter and columnist for Adelaide's *Register*, she portrays her role in explaining the Reform Bill as "merely the interpreter between the great thinkers of England and the people of South Australia" (iii). As an "interpreter," she was simply facilitating communication between male pundits and thinkers in the imperial metropole and the male-only pool of eligible voters in Australia.

Let us consider one more brief example that will clarify the goals and stakes of this chapter: the Irish-Canadian poet, Emily Elizabeth Beavan (1818-1897), who in 1845 published *Sketches and Tales Illustrative of Life in the Backwoods of New Brunswick, North America, Gleaned from Actual Observation and Experience During a Residence of Seven Years in That Interesting Colony*. It was just one of the many colonial guides that residents of British North America published in the middle of the nineteenth century, including the now more famous and canonical *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852) and *Life in the Backwoods* (1836) by the sisters Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill.[9] Generically, these texts share a mix of memoir, poetry, fables, sketches, and agricultural and household knowledge. In the opening pages of her text, Beavan neatly epitomizes the seeming apolitical nature of women's writing: "Of political, or depth of topographical information, the writer claims no share, and much of deep interest, or

[9] For a more thorough discussion of these texts, see Chapter II.

moving incident, cannot now be expected in the life of a settler in the woods" (1). But what follows makes evident the danger of such a rhetorical move: "The days when the war-whoop of the Indian was yelled above the burning ruins of the white man's dwelling are gone – their memory exists but in the legend of the winter's eve, and the struggle is now with the elements which form the climate" (1-2). Taken together, these lines tie Beavan's disavowal of politics to Indigenous dispossession and death as *already completed*, the past perfect tense of imperial conflict. It is a rhetorical sleight of hand to view Indigenous dispossession as *always already* complete, mourning the rougher, less civilized past. Such moves allow Beavan and others to largely ignore questions of the morality or ethics of imperialism. It's already done. What use are such questions?

In what follows, I consider two very different texts, both of which deploy discredible witnessing: Harriette McDougall's *Letters from Sarawak* (1854) and Charlotte Barton's *A Mother's Offering to Her Children* (1841). As I will show, the juxtaposition between these writers' framing and the substance of the texts — or, more broadly, between form and content — masks their participation in imperial discourse. Thus, while Anderson argues for reading the ways in which women writers "construct themselves in particular ways so that what is offered is not the person for itself, but a version of that person" (17), I argue for reading settler-colonial and colonial texts by women writers as actively concealing the violent nature of the British Empire. As Duncan Bell summarizes, "Most accounts of settler colonialism were marked by an ideological aporia" (42). These nineteenth-century writers deployed discredible witnessing to conceal these contradictions. In particular, I identify two trends: familial or maternal framing and the use of passive voice to describe imperial violence against Indigenous peoples. Broadly, I

argue not for reading these rhetorical strategies in the abstract but as moments in which writers actively disguise the violence inherent to the maintenance of British imperial supremacy.

We are familiar with the binary often applied to white women's writing in the nineteenth century, which Monica Anderson, thinking specifically of late Victorian women's travel writing, condenses "as either merely complicit in the spread of imperialism or praiseworthy in negotiating a place for themselves in colonial society" (14). Anderson adds that "neither alternative adequately addresses the range of tones and discourses" in the texts. Scholars such as Antoinette Burton have shown that women writers and activists were often able, to quote Anderson, to "negotiat[e] a place for themselves in colonial society" precisely by participating in the spread of empire, either materially or discursively (14). Yet, throughout the long durée of settler-colonialism, Anne McClintock argues, colonizers "feminized borders and boundaries" and "women served as mediating and threshold figures by means of which men oriented themselves in space, as agents of power and agents of knowledge" (24). Empire, politics, business — these domains could operate as exclusive only by acts of exclusion. And though discussions of the separate sphere ideology can seem reductive or simplistic — ignoring, for instance, the role that race, class, marriage status, or caste played in a woman writer's access to publishing — it is nonetheless true that women faced material obstacles to participating in "male" discourses about the maintenance and growth of the nineteenth-century British Empire. As Antoinette Burton summarizes, discussing the turn of the century debates about women's suffrage, those opposed to women's involvement could rely on "an imperial rationale: as the constitutionally weaker sex, women were not fit to govern an empire which relied upon military might and masculine strength for its preservation" (185). What discredible witnessing afforded

these writers, I argue, is access to political debates. The writers in this chapter wrote works that attempted to formally colonize the Indigenous peoples of the South Pacific.

Letters from Sarawak

In 1847, Francis Thomas (1817-86) and Harriette McDougall (1817-86) left the comforts of Britain for a five-month, 13,000-mile voyage to the obscure town of Kuching, in the newly created Kingdom of Sarawak.[10] They were tasked with building a Christian mission and converting the locals, religiously, culturally, and, perhaps, politically. They had no knowledge of the area, no skill in the local languages, no experience living in a tropical climate.[11] Francis McDougall had belonged to the College of Surgeons and worked as a Demonstrator of Anatomy at King's College, London, before becoming ordained at the insistence of his new wife, according to David Edwards. What Francis and Harriette had was a desire for conversion.[12] They left for Borneo, as an article reflecting on Francis' life decades later summarizes, to be "not only the first Bishop but the first Missionary to Borneo …. He had to bear trials and perils such as even the Missionary Episcopate seldom meets," including the climate, illness, "the deaths of many of his children, dangers from pirates and Malay and Chinese insurgents, obloquy at home" and others.[13] Throughout the decades, Harriette would write letters about their lives in Sarawak

[10] Even the famous traveler Mary Kingsley chose West Africa "for the Malayan region was too far off and too expensive" (1).
[11] The McDougalls studied the Malay language during the ocean voyage, and, though Frances seemed to gain a certain affinity from treating patients, McDougall herself is rueful about her language skills. She writes in *Sketches* that when she tries to arrange a baptism of two Malay women, "one said to the other, 'She talks like a book'" (20).
[12] Francis was actually one of the first medical missionaries and he opened a medical office and "dispensary" in their home in Kuching.
[13] "The Life of Bishop McDougall." *Monthly Record of Church Missions in Connection with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, no. CCCCXIII, 1 May 1890. *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.

that she compiled into two books about her experience, *Letters from Sarawak* in 1854 and then *Sketches of Our Life at Sarawak* in 1884. Both texts perform discredible witnessing.

In that way, McDougall was typical of British Protestant missionaries, who, according to Anna Johnston, "were prolific writers. Diaries, reports, letters, memoirs, histories, ethnographies, novels, children's books, translations, grammars, and many more kinds of texts spilled from their pens" (2003, 3). It is clear from contemporary citations, particularly the official periodical of The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, that the McDougalls also wrote regular letters back intended for a public readership as Francis rose from a missionary to the first Anglican Bishop of Labuan and Sarawak.[14]

Figure 1 Map of Borneo from McDougall's *Sketches of Our Life at Sarawak.*

McDougall's characterizations of the five-month voyage itself oscillate between genuine fear and ecstatic joy. [15] She writes, for example, that the *HMS Mary Louisa*, which carried the McDougalls and their son Harry along with a nurse to Singapore "was laden with coals and gunpowder" and "[s]ometimes, when storms of lightning and thunder burst upon us in those hot latitudes … I could not help picturing to myself what a bonfire we might make on the open sea if the light struck us!" (*Letters* 2). But then she marvels at the phosphorescent plankton on the open

[14] Anglican clerics determined it would be improper to create a bishopric in Sarawak, as it was not *de jure* part of the British Empire, so McDougall's see was placed on the island of Labuan, northwest of Brunei. McDougall also became the first bishop to be consecrated outside London.

[15] For the rest of this chapter, I will refer to Harriette as simply McDougall and specify when I am referencing her husband.

ocean: “When the sea was rough these little ocean-stars danced round our ships, sometimes gleaming on the foam of the waves, and sometimes floating in the dark hollows of the water” (*Letters* 3). Her vivid descriptions remind us that, on board, the McDougalls had little else to do. She could write with humor. As the ship nears Java, one of the water tanks bursts, and the passengers are limited to a quart of water per day. The passengers, all six of them, looked forward to their daily cup of tea. “[W]hat a wonderful colour it was, after all!” she writes, adding, “but that was the iron of the tank” (*Sketches* 15). “Notwithstanding these varieties, Charley,” she writes, “we lived the most monotonous life on board the Mary Louisa” (*Letters* 6).

The chapter discussing Singapore helps clarify McDougall’s rhetorical investments and the ways in which discredible witnessing operates in her text. When she and her husband arrive in the city, it has exploded from an East India Company trading post to a major port. McDougall found the city beautiful, describing how “the ground rises in gentle hills from the sea-shore; and those rising grounds are covered with plantations and gardens, and crowned with pretty English Bungalows – looking so cool, with their white walls and green verandahs, that the whole place seems a pleasure ground” (*Letters* 11). Her descriptions reveal the extent of European settlement in Singapore, and the familiar architecture and verdant landscapes must have been refreshing after spending five months at sea. They only spent a few weeks in Singapore before taking another steamer to Kuching in Sarawak, where they would spend the next twenty years building the mission.

She finds the city “thronged … by people of all nations” (*Letters* 12). This cultural exchange, McDougall writes, results in a variety of food and objects for sale in street bazaars, including “glass, crockery, cottons, muslins, and silks, and where you may see all sorts of odd things, more curious than beautiful” (*Letters* 14). There are also dangers, such as opium dens,

which McDougall derides, and reports of tigers "still lurking in the jungle, or even in the copses near English plantations" (*Letters* 15). After further descriptions of spice trees and other local flora, McDougall ends the chapter on a dour note, which I quote here at length:

> There is one little spot at Singapore, more dear to Papa and me, than all the plan besides. This is the English cemetery, a beautiful garden on the side of a hill, where was buried our dear child Harry. He died at Singapore, at the age of three years, in 1850. A cross of granite marks the grave, and a jessamine bush, transplanted from our garden at Sarawak, grows beside it. (*Letters* 18)

The enormity of this moment is belied by McDougall's writing. It comes at the end of a chapter about Singapore that reads closer to a travel guide than to a mother working through her grief. She also turns to the passive voice here, evacuating her own agency. The child "was buried." The simplicity of the phrase masks what must have been an enormous shock, one the McDougalls would experience again and again during their residence in Sarawak. Even the "jessamine bush" was simply "transplanted," a proleptic moment that subtly emphasizes the magnitude of her grief. It is no simple task to sail back from Sarawak to Singapore with a plant. Yet, this moment also contradicts her own framing. Why, if these letters are to her other child, does she not lead with this news? Why is she writing letters to her infant child, at all? As a reader, we are left adrift in her narrative, one that emphasizes her familial and maternal position while refusing acts of disclosure we associate with motherhood.

Letters from Sarawak emphasizes McDougall's maternal position in order to dislocate or obfuscate her involvement with the imperial project. The text opens with a preface that positions McDougall as a mother first. "All parents whose fate separates them from their little ones, during their early years, must feel anxious to lessen the distance which parts them …. With this view the

following letters were sent to my little boy" (*Letters* iii). It seems likely the child is still a toddler. As Kristia Siegel writes in the introduction to *Intersections, Women's Travel and Theory*, "most travel writing [by women] began with an apology (e.g., for writing in the first person, for engaging in such inappropriate activity, for bothering the reader with their trivial endeavors, and so forth)" (*Letters* 3). But McDougall's language is more complicated and her positioning more complex than this. McDougall was not a temporary traveler but a partner in a missionary project to Borneo that was, itself, part of a broader socio-political project to incorporate the island into the British Empire.

Anchored off the coast of Java, McDougall reports seeing the Indigenous to whom she and her husband have come to preach for the first time. "We … were soon surrounded with little boats, bringing fowls, turtles, fruit, parrots, and Java sparrows. Here the dark skinned Malay, so interesting to us, was seen for the first time" (*Letters* 9). For a writer as deft as McDougall, the sentence construction here is awkward and curiously passive. The Malay "were seen" she writes, without indicating by whom, erasing herself from a moment of intercultural exchange. When she arrives in Sarawak, she rehearses well-trodden pre-lapsarian tropes that contribute to what Adam Lifshey, in *Specters of Conquest*, calls (in the context of North America) the "ongoing production of absence" of indigenous peoples. Though the historian Carl Trocki has argued that in the early nineteenth century, Malay "remained one of the most sparsely populated areas on earth" (16), there was substantial settlement, particularly near the city of Kuching, which was home to Malays, Dyaks, and growing numbers of Chinese migrants who worked in mining. McDougall, however, imagines an island free of human intervention:

> There is something sublime in the thought of wide forests, plains, and rivers, where no human being lives — where evil deeds never cursed the ground for man's sake — and

> where the songs of birds, the chirping of insects, the rush of waters, and the sighing of the wind … are the only sounds which have broken the stillness of the air for hundreds of years, if not since the very creation of the world. (*Letters* 23)

She argues that European colonization is the sole means of improvement to so-called wild land; "how much better it would be, if the voices of men, women, and children made these solitudes echo with songs of praise, or the longings of their hearts after Him who made them" (*Letters* 23-4). Like Beavan, McDougall here renders the Indigenous inhabitants of Sarawak invisible. The only obstacles, then, to large-scale settlement are time and effort. As David Spurr describes, to many Western writers, indigenous and colonized peoples "live … in their bodies and in natural space, but not in a body politic worthy of the name nor in meaningful historic time" (22). In McDougall's text, this binary emerges as a function of language, as part of the discredible witnessing that characterizes her relationship to the imperial project.

Just ten years before the McDougalls arrived in Sarawak, a former East India Company officer, James Brooke, had received the title of governor of Sarawak from the Sultan of Brunei. It's an odd story. Brooke gained the title "for his armed intervention to suppress rebellion" of pirates and other discontents (Bickers 159-60). Brooke then parlayed his connection to the British Empire and promises made to him before he aided in quelling the rebellion to transform the governorship into a hereditary, autonomous title. In essence, he was King of Sarawak, a title that his descended "White Rajahs" would hold until 1946. Reviewing a history of the kingdom in 1955, the scholar Andrew McFadyean summarized, "James Brooke was not a man of great importance and Sarawak is not a territory of great importance, but both are of some interest," characterizing Brooke's as a "story of imperial romance .... which illustrates vividly how empire building *was,* in places at any rate, the result of accident" (91). This Seeley-esque summation of

Brooke's career ignores how such lands were actually won. As Alex Middleton contextualizes, Brooke's "heroic" story arrived in Britain amid an age of turmoil and apprehension about the empire's future. "Riots in Canada and abortive rebellions in Ceylon and the Ionian Islands were succeeded by yet another war in South Africa" (381). Middleton recognizes a general scholarly disinterest in Brooke who, he argues, "has proven a poor fit for the concerns of mainstream imperial historians" (382). Nevertheless, "Brooke fascinated his contemporaries, capturing the imagination of the British political and intellectual elite more powerfully than any other imperial adventurer before David Livingstone" (Middleton 382). He was a hero, if an inconvenient one, whose brazenness and personal ambitions proved uncomfortable with the language of civilizing that cloaked imperial expansion.

It is no wonder then that after Brooke invited missionaries, the funds were readily raised by several mission societies.[16] Brooke traveled to London and, apparently, met with the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Bishop of London. All three were present for a meeting in Hanover Square, which *The Morning Post* covered enthusiastically and at which Francis McDougall was announced as the head of the mission. Francis would be responsible for "conferring upon [the Indigenous] those temporal benefits which may lead the way to the communication of spiritual knowledge."[17] Though Sarawak was not *officially* a British colony, McDougall imposes such conditions in her writing. When describing Borneo, McDougall writes that "although both the English and Dutch have taken possession of different parts of the coast, the English have not ventured far inland, and the Dutch, who have explored it more, have kept their discoveries very secret, lest the riches of the country should excite the cupidity of others"

[16] Originally, the McDougalls were paid by The Borneo Society, though, after some administrative wrangling, the mission at Sarawak was transferred to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.
[17] "Borneo Church Mission Society." *Morning Post*, 23 Nov. 1847, p. 3. *British Library Newspapers*.

(*Letters* 19-20). Borneo is not valuable *per se*; it is valuable if it allows the British Empire to compete with other European powers or to grow economically. It is in service of such a mission that she imagines transforming (read: Westernizing) the island. "Such blessings may one day dawn," she writes, when Christian missionaries "teach the native tribes to cultivate the good land which God has given them, and to turn the jungle into fields, pastures, and orchards, town and villages, with churches and school houses" (*Letters* 24). She cloaks her writing in the language of a missionary, but what she describes in this section are dreams of economic growth that will benefit Great Britain. It is an instrumentalist view of her role as an educator, one that seems inscribed by an imperial system meant to be distinct from Brooke's kingdom.

Though the Sultan of Brunei had ceded Sarawak to James Brooke because of his efforts in fighting pirates, the pirate menace did not simply vanish. When the McDougalls arrived in Sarawak, "no merchant boat dared go out of the river alone, and unarmed" (*Letters* 83). Outside Kuching, the stories were even bloodier, with reports of "men, women, and children, barbarously murdered by these wretches [pirates]" (*Letters* 83). She adds, forebodingly, "I remember once a boat being found with only three fingers of a man in it, and a bloody mark at the side, where the heads of those to whom the boat belonged had been cut off" (*Letters* 83). McDougall and her husband witnessed a campaign orchestrated by Brooke with the assistance of some Dyak and Malay groups as they massed before attacking a supposed pirate stronghold. The English commander "offered prizes to all who should bring in captives," but the noble order — if it were given — was not followed, and McDougall laments that "the prisoners were very few" (*Letters* 88). The adjective "noble" here conceals that the deadly incursion was led by Brooke with the express intent of ending the pirate threat. The language centers British attempts at nobility —

they "offered prizes" — and the violence done to the Indigenous pirates is, again, merely implied.

During these internecine struggles we see McDougall herself taking an active part in the colonial project. After Brooke and his forces returned from their raid against the pirates, they brought six Dyak women to serve as "hostages for their husbands' good behavior," who were housed in the McDougall's mission house (*Letters* 113). After giving the women food and clothing in order to prove "how differently Christian people treat their prisoners," McDougall then tried to convince the women to give up their children to be raised by her and her husband. The Dyak women "went to the Rajah [Brooke] and made him promise them I should not have the children" (*Letters* 114). She admits, without much self-awareness, that her methods were too extreme for the adventuring Brooke. While he was happy to enforce a new way of life on the various groups living in Sarawak, including introducing commodity farming, even he recognized that kidnapping children was too extreme. The missionary motivation to Christianize and Westernize the children ran afoul of the women's claims to maternal duties. McDougall did begin adopting "orphans," eventually raising seven Indigenous children whose backgrounds are left unsaid in her narrative, though a contemporary source describes the system thusly: "[t]he conditions on which the boarders were taken are, the parents should give them to the Mission for ten years … and that after they were educated, they should be free to follow such employments as they chose."[18] With them and the twenty other children who attended the McDougall's school, the husband-and-wife team acted as perfect agents of colonization, teaching the children not only the English language but the Christian religion and to reject their ways of life. In a letter to the

[18] "Borneo." *Monthly Record of Church Missions in Connection with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, 1 Jan. 1856, pg. 5, *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals.*

Monthly Record of Church Missions in 1864, Francis reports that they have more than sixty students, including "daughters of wealthy Chinese, who are anxious to put them under my wife's care."[19] McDougall writes proudly of the school. "I scarcely think twenty-seven English children would have been so soon and easily reduced to order as our little foreigners … they were docile and obedient" (*Letters* 121). The language here is domestic, yet the implications are much broader. McDougall's framing of this situation as between a teacher and her students simultaneously distracts from and legitimizes McDougall's true role as an agent of the imperial mission.

McDougall's memoirs speak little to the content of the education that she and her husband provided for the multiracial inhabitants of Sarawak. Broadly, as Rebecca Swartz argues, "the 'civilising mission' was about the management of difference" and "schools and education formed a central part of this process" (2). In this way, the McDougalls acted as the complement to Brooke. Though, as Edward Said argues, "The main battle in imperialism is over land," questions of "who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future" are prefigured by narrative and by discourse (xiii). If Brooke was responsible for turning Sarawak into an unofficial British outpost, the McDougalls were, on a small scale, attempting to fill it with the kinds of native informants that helped enable the British Empire to control such vast swaths of the globe in the nineteenth century. And they were doing this while characterizing their work as part of a broader Christian mission. In a memoir supposedly written to tell her life story to her son, we read the violence encoded in the

[19] "The Borneo Mission." *Monthly Record of Church Missions in Connection with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts,* no. CVI, 1 Oct. 1864, p. 199. *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals.*

McDougall's missionary project. Her familiar framing renders her activity in terms we now recognize as the liberal humanist cover for the imperial project.

McDougall's deployment of discredible witnessing becomes clearer when we turn to *Sketches of Our Life at Sarawak*, published in 1882. In this text, McDougall drops the explicit maternal framing for one much subtler. "I think it will be better to extend the story over the twenty years that Sarawak was our home," she writes, in explaining the need for a new memoir (*Sketches* 7). The mission's progress "was often unavoidably impeded by the struggles of the infant State" (*Sketches* 7). Now, McDougall implies, it is not just the Indigenous Malays and Dyaks who must be treated as children by the McDougalls but the entire nation of Sarawak. As a reviewer for *The Academy* wrote, "Mrs. McDougall's little volume does not profess to be a history of events; it does not deal with any controversial points, and we hear little of the chief actors in the drama."[20] Instead, "the writer's main purpose is with the daily course of existence, and the scenes among which it lay. For such a task, a woman's pen is the appropriate instrument."[21] The reviewer adds, in a closing note, "we trace indirectly in these 'Sketches' the progress towards good order and civilization; and we follow with much sympathy the fortunes of the writer, after twenty years of arduous labour, to the well-earned respose of a comfortable English vicarage."[22] Though reports and letters from the McDougalls would appear regularly in the *Monthly Record of Church Missions*, her collected books were only lightly reviewed in the London press. Sarawak was a curious case but not a site of inherent imperial interest. An article from a London missionary sheet proclaims that Francis sold more than 3,000 copies of *Letters*

[20] "Book Review." *The Academy, 1869-1902, 0269-333X,* no. 552, 1882, pg. 395. *ProQuest*.
[21] *ibid*.
[22] *ibid*.

from Sarawak when he traveled to London in the early 1850s to manage the transfer of the mission and to recuperate.[23]

The use of passive language to deny the role of the state in anti-Indigenous and anti-black violence continues. Newspapers and media routinely describe police shootings in passive voice. As Nick Martin writes for *The New Republic*, mainstream media tend to use "mealy-mouthed language when describing police violence; clear, active language when describing confrontation initiated by protesters" (n.p.). But McDougall is merely one example. Discredible witnessing was so routine that it is easy to miss when reviewing women's writing in the nineteenth century. For the writer Charlotte Barton (1796-1867), often credited as Australia's first children's author, maternal framing was both a means of justifying the text's existence and a narrative device. Her *A Mother's Offering to Her Children* (1841) is a text told as a dialogue between a mother (Mrs. Saville) and her curious and precocious children, who pepper her with questions about geological formations, Indigenous history, and Australian flora and fauna. Like McDougall, Barton then uses this maternal frame to depict the Indigenous peoples of Australia and the South Pacific as dangers to progress and civilization while concealing the threat that white Australian settler-colonists posed to one another. In writing a book for children, argues Clare Bradford, Barton was drawing on a well-established genre, including works by Anna Letitia Barbauld and Ellenor Fenn that similarly "incorporated information and moral precepts into conversations between mothers and children" (285). That Barton wrote this in Australia, however, was new. There had been spelling and grammar books for children published, but none written on the continent. Elizabeth Webby writes that Barton's text "was equally didactic in intent" to those early textbooks, "if

[23] "Borneo." *Monthly Record of Church Missions in Connection with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, 1 Jan. 1856, pg. 5.

rather more sophisticated in form" (67). Where Barton's text differs, Bradford rightly asserts, is "its emphasis on the exotic and the adventurous: stories of exploration, shipwreck and kidnapping; and accounts of Indigenous cultures and people" (285). My interest, then, is precisely how this recognizable binary is communicated in Barton's text, in its deployment of discredible witnessing to legitimate imperial ambitions to conquer and settle Indigenous-held land.

Settlers and visitors had been writing about Australia since the First Fleet sailed into Botany Bay. And, as Elizabeth Webby writes, "[f]rom the beginning it was clear that there would be a ready market in England for accounts" of Australia (51). There were few women writing from the continent in the first half of the nineteenth century, though those who did, such as Louisa Ann Meredith (1812-95), also adopted aspects of discredible witnessing. She apologizes to readers in the preface to her *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales* that she "cannot for a moment flatter myself with the idea of conveying information to those skilled in scientific detail" (vii). "Books of reference I have none," she writes, "nor can I here obtain the use of any" (viii). Instead, she relies on her husband, whom she calls "my sole resource" (viii). Her expertise, then, derives from her position as a wife rather than as someone versed in the biological sciences.

Barton turned to writing to supplement the income of her agricultural holdings and published *A Mother's Offering*, becoming the first Australian children's author.[24] Barton had left England in 1826, according to a biographer, to work as a governess for a prosperous family. Instead, she met the aspiring farmer and writer James Atkinson aboard the voyage, and they married soon after landing in Australia. James published *An Account of the State of Agriculture*

[24] For decades after the initial publication, the text was originally attributed to Lady Harriet Bremer, the wife of a decorated Naval officer. Critic Marcie Muir argued the text belonged to Barton in a 1980 publication, citing contemporary newspaper reviews that named Barton.

and Grazing in New South Wales in 1826, though he died within a few years, and Barton was left alone, "managing a large property" and "control[ling] convict labor" (Clarke 22). These problems, Clarke writes, were exacerbated by "a notorious breakdown of law and order" in the area as "attacks on homesteads and on travellers by bushrangers were almost daily occurrences" (22).[25] Barton was suddenly left to both run the property and struggle with the executors of Atkinson's will as well as raise four children.

James and Barton's daughter, Louisa Atkinson (1834-72) would later write about her childhood, sometimes obliquely, in a column for the *Sydney Herald*, though much of her early years and of Barton's life in Australia remain murky. Patricia Clarke published the definitive – and so far, only – biography of Atkinson, *Pioneer Writer*, in 1990, but acknowledged the sparse personal materials left behind.[26] We do, however, know of several key moments in Barton's and Atkinson's lives that reflect the violence of the colony. In 1836, after James Atkinson died, a convict working at their family estate was arrested on suspicion of murdering another convict laborer.[27] The overseer, George Barton — whom Charlotte had married — was too drunk to present evidence at the trial, and the suspected killer was set free. That man was John Lynch, who then became Australia's most prolific serial killer, the so-called "Berrima Axe Murderer."[28] The drunken overseer, George, was himself tried and convicted of murder in 1854, though by then he and Barton had split on rather poor terms.[29] I point to these moments to juxtapose the

[25] Clarke relays a story in which Charlotte and George Barton were accosted by armed bushgrangers themselves, an account that found its way into the *Sydney Herald* in early 1836.
[26] Indeed, when I viewed the materials in the Mitchell Library in the State Library of New South Wales, the entire catalog filled just two manila envelopes.
[27] As David Andrew Roberts summarizes, "[c]onvict labour built the colony's infrastructure, and its emerging industries and businesses" (33). According to the State Library of New South Wales, by the 1830s, more than half of convicts worked for private employers rather than the state.
[28] Kidd, Paul. *Australia's Serial Killers*. Pan Macmillan Australia, 2011.
[29] The judge in Barton's case, according to Clarke, was the crown prosecutor who was unable to convict Lynch. Clarke characterizes this as a case of coincidence, but it points more to the insular world of early Australian politics.

violence of Barton's life in Australia with the kind of violence she depicts in her writing. If, as Bradford argues, Barton's text is meant to train future settler-colonists, the dangers she articulates concern only Indigenous peoples; the infamous white serial killer is noticeably absent. The text mentions bushrangers only once, in the section "Extraordinary Sounds," which details odd occurrences in the area that some attributed to geological processes. Mrs. Saville tells the children that, upon hearing "the apparent report of musketry …. We hastened out, supposing the Mounted Police had come to the spot, and were engaged with Bushrangers" (n.p.). Thus, in the one mention of white settler violence, the criminal bushrangers are also already paired with, and narratively neutralized by, representatives of the colonial state.

The longest section of *A Mother's Offering* retells the dramatic history of the wreck of *The Charles Eaton*, a barque that crashed near Mer Island in 1834. Nearly the entire crew died, many from exposure or drowning, and many others, at least according to reports, by attacks from the Torres Strait Islanders, though such reports were often used to explain the deaths of white sailors from other reasons. The purpose in Barton's narrative is twofold. First, as noted in the unsigned review of *A Mother's Offering* in the *Sydney Gazette*, this section "has an air of adventure and romance about it" that the writer likens to the "pleasure … with which little folks must have listened to its recital" (4). In other words, it's a good story. The second purpose, I argue, is to remind Barton's listeners that the Indigenous Australians remain a *threat* to both colonialists' livelihoods and to their lives, though Barton makes these points implicitly and through suggestion, rather than forthrightly. The structure of Barton's writing itself leads readers to understand Indigenous Australians as the primary threat colonialists face in Australia. As Clare articulates, the text's metanarrative "involves an empty land waiting to be discovered by the children and (by implication) readers of the book" (285).

Though Clare argues that Mrs. Saville's perspective in the text evinces "that of a cultured British migrant viewing the new land through British eyes" (285), the characters actually display a surprising knowledge of Indigenous cultural practices. For instance, the book repeats a section from James Atkinson's agricultural text about the complicated process by which Indigenous Australians transform the burrawang palm into food, but in the voice of one of the Saville children. The specificity of this knowledge implies an ethnographic, if not interpersonal, familiarity.[30] Thus, despite the children in *A Mother's Offering* evincing a surprising knowledge of mainland Indigenous practices, implying an ethnographic familiarity if not interpersonal relationships, the text lumps all Indigenous people together through stereotypical depictions. When Mrs. Saville tells her children of a military expedition to retrieve some of the survivors of the *Charles Eaton*, she describes boarding netting, which was "used to prevent people rushing on deck" (n.p.). "I am glad they had these nettings Mamma," Emma replies, "or these dreadful savages might have overpowered them, as the New Zealanders, and many other savage people have done to ships" (n.p.). Though they seem antiquated now, sailing ships in the nineteenth century were hubs of technological innovation, outfitted with the best tools available for navigation, timekeeping, and war. As Tony Ballantyne and Lachy Paterson argue, "the native was seen as the embodiment of orality and the past, while the European colonizer was equated with … the ever-changing present of modernity" (11). In this way, Barton is participating in a literary and artistic tradition that juxtaposes the technologically sophisticated Europeans and the 'backwards' Indigenous, a tradition that stretches back to the earliest encounters with Indigenous peoples in the New World.

[30] James Atkinson had hired Indigenous Australians on guides during several trips further inland.

Formally, Barton likes to express Indigenous violence in active sentences. Mrs. Saville tells her children that the Indigenous people of Murray Island, for example, keep "the skins of hands hanging up" and then "wear [them] as ornaments on days of rejoicing" (n.p.). White or British colonial violence, however, she obfuscates behind a passive voice. When British sailors investigate rumors of *Eaton* survivors off Murray Island, Mrs. Saville describes that "the natives … were soon brought to confess that there was one white man on the island" (n.p.). State violence is invisible (the act of bringing happens without named actors); as readers, we see only the effects of this violence. We see — or are meant to see — Indigenous cooperation and British benevolence, instead of imagining the *HMS Tigris*, a ten-gun brig, as a modern machine of war.[31] Mrs. Savilledoes characterize a Dutch response to pirates near Northern Queensland in a more active tone: "they dispatched an armed vessel to the place; destroyed the village, plantations, and growing crops" (n.p.). But, she adds, "[m]ost of the natives escaped by hurrying into the interior on the first alarm" (n.p.). Or, again, later in the text, Mrs. Saville tells her children about another encounter between Dutch soldiers and Indigenous peoples. The Dutch "took several of the natives … where it is supposed they were executed" (n.p.). We might read from the use of the passive voice an acknowledgment, albeit slight, that Mrs. Saville understands the illegitimacy of settler violence. Or, as I believe, we are meant to see the executions as natural, as inevitable. We suppose they were executed because they interfered with international commerce. And though she names the Dutch in the opening of the sentence, the Indigenous "were executed," another passive phrasing that asks readers to deny the very real violence of colonial expansion and maintenance. For Barton, discredible witnessing is both a means of

[31] For reference, the *Tigris* was the same class as the *HMS Beagle*.

legitimating her foray into publishing by placing the text in the domestic sphere and a way of legitimating colonial violence through linguistic construction.

When Mrs. Saville tells her children about the cooperation between the Dutch governor of Batavia and the British administration in India to find the survivors of the *Eaton*, it is not merely a recapitulation of international diplomacy. The exchanges function more as a symbol of the racial dynamics of the Pacific. On one side, Mrs. Saville tells her children, are the white, civilized inhabitants of Batavia, India, and Australia. On the other side are the Indians, Bengalis, Malays, Māori, Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders whom the Europeans have deemed incapable of self-governing. Overall, the stories in the text, argues Bradford, "demonstrate[ ] the superiority of whiteness through contrasts between civilisation and savagery" (286). That nearly all of the characters "speak" with a similar voice is likely a result of Barton's inexperienced hand. Yet, the effect of this repetitive chorus is that even the children come across as suspicious of Indigenous intent. Consider the following scene. As Mrs. Saville nears the end of the *Eaton* tale, she describes how several Indigenous people "prevented, by struggling" a man armed with a spear coming toward the Europeans. When the Europeans sail away safely, Clara responds, "I am quite relieved at their escape; it is more than I expected" (n.p.). The children of the tale have already learned to be paranoid readers of Indigenous intent.

The examples throughout the text paint a simple world. For the Indigenous, violence — and a particular kind of depraved violence — is the norm. Indigenous peoples, Barton's text implies, are violent by nature and must *choose* to act otherwise. The Europeans, meanwhile, use violence only when necessary and in the pursuit of progress, such as when the sailors in Barton's text recognize the signs of Dutch settlement as both "Dutch colors" and "patches of cleared and cultivated land" (n.p.). As David Spurr argues, "The colonizing imagination takes for granted

that the land and its resources belong to those who are best able to exploit them according to the values of a Western commercial and industrial system" (31).

Barton's book emerged in Australia a few years after the Myall Creek Massacre, in which Anglo-Australian settlers murdered at least 28 Wirrayaraay and Kamilaroi "women children, and elderly men" (Johnston 2021, 278). The name Myall Creek still reverberates and has come to epitomize, according to Julie Collins, "some of the worst aspects of our history" (166). What set this massacre apart from similar acts of violence against Indigenous Australians is that most of the perpetrators were arrested and convicted in trials that generated substantial public interest.[32] Collins comments that the massacre and subsequent convictions and executions have been "[h]ailed as a turning point in black-white relations," though "a more cynical interpretation could point to the fact that those found guilty were ex-convicts, the most 'disposable' elements of the white community" (152). The years before and after the massacre were marked, according to Alan Lester and Fae Dussert, by an intensification of settlement further inland than the coastal regions. This "British invasion," in Lester and Dussert's words, gave colonial authorities the chance "to plan more proactively for more human relations between Briton and Aborigine" (120). But, as they argue, this paternalism largely failed as the "violent British settler land grab" continued apace (144). Collins reads this, again, more cynically, writing that one of the lessons of Myall Creek "was that those responsible for subsequent massacres became much more secretive about their actions" (152).

Even when Barton's text attempts to lament the deaths of Indigenous Australians, Barton uses the rhetorical tools of discredible witnessing to dislocate the site of violence back onto

[32] As Johnston notes, Eliza Hamilton Dunlop (1796-1880) published her "The Aboriginal Mother" in response to the massacre and ensuing trials.

Indigenous communities. In a telling example, Mrs. Saville tells her children – again with a passive-voice construction -- that an Indigenous child whom they knew has died: "Little Sally the black child has been accidentally killed" (n.p.). The conversation continues:

> Mrs. S. —
> She was playing in the barn, which is only a temporary one; and pulled down a heavy prop of wood upon herself. It fell on her temple; and killed her immediately.
> Emma. —
> Do you not think her mother will be very sorry, when she hears of it?
> Mrs. S. —
> Alas! my dear children, her mother also met with an untimely death. These poor uncivilized people, most frequently meet with some deplorable end through giving way to unrestrained passions. (n.p.)

We learn that the mother, Nanny, died when her half-brother "threw a spear after her; which entered the back of her neck." As she attempted to run away her half-brother "struck her on the head with his tomahawk," Mrs. Saville reports, adding, "I was told she was a dreadful sight in the morning" (n.p.). In one of the few critical reviews of Barton, J.J. Healy describes this section of Barton's text, "Anecdotes of the Aborigines of New South Wales" as "a list of Gothic horrors" (32). But Sally had already been separated from her mother when a white woman, Jane, "took a fancy" to her, and Nanny "agreed to leave the child; as soon as it was weaned" (n.p.). Here, the violence that Barton's text obscures behind passive language is the slow violence of dispossession and forced cultural assimilation. In this instance, those forces are articulated as family separation, a policy that would come to define the Australian government's paternalistic relationship to Indigenous children. The mother "agreed to leave the child" while the white woman "took a fancy" to young Sally. Barton frames the settler's desire for a child as benevolent and describes the Indigenous mother as simply complying with the wishes of the settler-colonist. Continuing with graphic descriptions of infanticide and racist descriptions that I will not quote, this section exemplifies Sheila Collingwood-Whittick's argument that the land-grabs and

deforestation were as punishing as the incidents of interpersonal violence: “When [the indigenous] were not actually being ordered at gun-point to get off the settler's ‘property,’ chronic starvation forced them to leave their lineage territory ... their physical survival was, however, very much at the expense of the spiritual bonds that constituted the very basis of their identity” (xxx).

Then, of course, there were women writers who simply ignored such niceties. The social reformer and speaker Annie Besant was such an exception, commencing her *India and the Empire* with the bold claim, “The ignorance of the English public as to things relating to India, and the indifference of the House of Commons … are grave dangers to the Empire” (3). She confidently asserts her own expertise and writes in active, agential sentences. Reactions to Besant’s writing and her public embrace of atheism, however, were not met kindly. Besant’s treatment in contemporary newspapers and periodicals reinforces the separate sphere ideology that she was transgressing. An unsigned article in *The Sporting Times* from Aug. 25, 1877, begins, “What Dick Steele wrote of Lady Elizabeth Hastings, ‘to behold her is an immediate *check* to loose behavior,’ is repeated by ourselves of Mrs. Annie Besant” (7). The short article then calls for Besant to commit suicide, writing “we have a list of those who really ought to abridge their lives” (7).

These rhetorical moves become so regular that, by the beginning of the twentieth century, women writers are actively parodying them. The Australian writer Ethel Turner (1870-1958) frames her canonical *Seven Little Australians* (1894) much in the way that Barton does. The difference, however, is that Turner asserts that “[n]ot one of the seven [children] is really good, for the very excellent reason that Australian children never are” (n.p.). The book, Bradford adds, was praised by Mark Twain in America and George Meredith in the UK and is “the only 19th-

century Australian text still read by children" regularly (287). Similarly, the poet — and Banjo Paterson's grandmother — Emily Mary Barton (1817-1909) begins her posthumously published poetry collection, *Straws on the Stream* (1910), with a phrenologist reading. "Madam," he begins, "it is rare to find a head so thoroughly cultivated as yours; it is equally rare to find a brain so extremely active" (n.p.). Instead of beginning with an apology, she begins with a second-person narration of her own ability. The phrenologist continues,

> if you were compelled to manage a large educational establishment, you could do so with great success, you could teach teachers. You are well fitted for the study of medicine, natural science, domestic chemistry and economy, human physiology, phrenology, moral and natural philosophy, and you have fine taste for literature and art, as well as good ability for languages. (n.p.)

The language both emphasizes Emily Barton's intellectual ability while also placing the responsibility for her appraisal with a professional. In an obituary for Emily Barton in the *Cumberland Argus*, the writer commends E.M., as she often signed, as an accomplished writer and vital member of the community, before noting that her husband "commenced his career as a squatter at Boree-Nyrang," near present-day Molong, and that one of her sons was also "a large squatter in Queensland."[33] The obituary then describes a massacre between two different Indigenous groups in which "the Boree homestead [was] made the theatre of the savage conflict."[34] Some of the fleeing Indigenous Australians "were hidden by Mrs. Barton … in the rooms and underneath the beds," the obituary commends.[35]

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[33] "Death of Mrs. E. M. Barton." *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW : 1888 - 1950)* 28 August 1909. *Trove.*
[34] *ibid.*
[35] *ibid.*

What the obituary reveals, then, is the conflict between Indigenous groups borne of land and resource scarcity as the Australian "squatocracy" consolidated settler land ownership. We cannot, of course, draw a direct line from E.M. Barton and her husband to this incident of violence. What a recognition of discredible witnessing and a critical view toward the imperial archive does allow is a view past the surface, past the language colonizers used to mask the violence and brutality of the process of dispossession and replacement.

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Chapter 2: Silent and Silenced: Canadian Colonial Guides and First Nations Knowledge

"'What is death?—my sister say.'
'Ask not, brother, breathing clay.
Ask the earth on which we tread,
That silent empire of the dead"
— Susanna Moodie, from *Life in the Clearings*

"For here, there are no sordid fears,
No crimes, no misery, no tears
No pride of wealth; the heart to fill,
No laws to treat my people ill."
— Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, "Lines written at Castle Island, Lake Superior"

Between 1811 and 1851, according to historian James Belich, the settler population of Ontario — then called Upper Canada and, later, Canada West — exploded, from 60,000 to 1.4 million. This was a more than 20-fold increase in population, fueled largely by settlers emigrating from across Europe in massive numbers, though mostly from Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, and Germany. What Belich calls a "sporadic and frenetic" process was, then as now, a mix of personal and political desires. Some European settlers fled religious and political oppression. Some sought cheaper land and even cheaper labor. "The first and by far the most prominent" reason for emigration, according to the nineteenth-century writer Joseph Pickering, "is privation, and its consequent distress" (1). Pickering had lost his farm in England as the price of food subsidies crashed in the post-Napoleonic Wars depression, which, as Linda Peterson writes, also left "significant numbers of soldiers, sailors and officers" without work or pay (56). Cobbling together what he could, Pickering traveled the Eastern United States and British North America, as the subtitle of his guide proclaims, "with a view to settle as an emigrant." Pickering was just one of many writers who propounded the virtues of emigrating to British North America in the early to mid-nineteenth century. These texts celebrated Canada, in terms that will seem

familiar, as a land of opportunity for those willing to work for their sustenance. Robert Mudie, who published *The Emigrant's Pocket Companion* (1832) from afar by synthesizing and compiling, described Canada as "the best country for a *free* emigrant—that is, an emigrant who is free to go where he pleases, and at the same time free from prejudice—to go to, from any part of the British Isles, is the British colonies in North America" (ix, emphasis in original). There was enough "good press" about Canada that, in an 1831 review of Martin Doyle's *Hints on Emigration to Upper Canada*, the reviewer playfully warns that if the letters from emigrants appended to Doyle's text "become extensively read, we should not be surprised to see whole districts depopulated, or at least deserted, by all those who can pay their passage to Upper Canada."[36] In Canada, Pickering notes in 1832, "New towns and villages springing up; churches and meeting-houses erecting in every direction; a college in full operation in York; some superior schools established" (x). One feels in Pickering's staccato writing the speed and zeal with which European settlers built, the present progressive tense implying that there is more to come, more to build, more to see. Overall, according to historian Roger Nichols, the European population of Canada grew from roughly 500,000 people in 1815 to more than 2.5 million at the time of Confederation in 1867.

The British government encouraged this emigration, specifically that of upper- and middle-class settlers by offering officers land en lieu of half pay. Beside notions of fortifying a boundary against a rebellious former colony, [37] there were powerful economic incentives.

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[36] "Emigration to Canada." *The Literary Guardian, and Spectator of Books, Fine Arts, Public Amusements, and Fashions, 1831-1832*, no. 5, 1831, pg. 72. *ProQuest*.

[37] Jameson, in her *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles*, mocks the border at Niagara between Canada and the United States: "The Americans have a fort on their side, and we also have a fort on ours. What the amount of *their* garrison may be I know not, but our force consists of three privates and a corporal, with adequate arms and ammunition, i.e. rusty firelocks and damaged guns. The fortress itself I mistook for a dilapidated brewery. This is charming – it *looks* like peace and security, at all events" (*Vol. I* 62; emphasis in original).

Francis Evans, in his *Emigrants Directory* (1833), writes, that "every man, woman and child in these colonies, on average, makes use of forty dollars worth of British goods annually; whereas, if the thousands who have emigrated from these countries remained at home, they would not, on an average, consume one-third of that amount" (iv). More broadly, asks William Dunlop, in his *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada* (1832), "Who then are to go to Canada to restore the equilibrium between demand and supply?" (5).

In this chapter, I turn to colonial guides written by women to interrogate the way the genre silenced Indigenous voices and actively encouraged Indigenous dispossession. Generically, colonial guides by men and women produced during these decades combined frontier memoir and advice, poems, sketches[38] and legends and fables about the early days of Anglo-Canadian settlement, a capacious form that proved popular.[39] These texts blended sometimes wry, sometimes saccharine depictions of daily life with thorough — occasionally, surprisingly so — information about the material conditions of moving to Canada. The authors were trying to "sell" Canada as much as they were trying to sell copies of their books and seemed to be responding to a hunger for information for both those considering emigration and those who just want folksy, slice of life tales. Francis Evans was a minor government official in British North America moved to publish his guide after witnessing "the vast increase of Emigrants that arrived at Quebec last season, and who, generally speaking, had very little correct information" (iii). They were, he writes, borrowing from the King James Bible, "strangers in a strange land" (iii) who were at the mercy of peddlers and thieves, not to mention bears, wolves, and rattlesnakes. And there was legitimate danger for European immigrants to North America.

[38] For more about Moodie use of the sketch, see Carl Ballstadt's "Susanna Moodie and the English Sketch."
[39] Belich charts a steady climb of texts in *The Times* (London) digital database with the words "settlers" and "emigrants" throughout the nineteenth century, from under 200 in the 1800s to thousands of entries by the 1850s.

Evans had died of cholera before his text was published.[40] There was also a real danger of war with the United States for much of the 1830s and 1840s.[41]

If both men and women writers of these colonial guides shared a desire to inform and a market for those texts, they also differed significantly.[42] A writer such as Susanna Moodie (1803-85) could illuminate life on the Canadian frontier with humor and verve but, as Linda K. Hughes argues, "No matter in what genre women published, they had to negotiate assumptions about women's writing" (56). In other words, Moodie's text, which would become the now canonical *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), could opine about the state of society in Canada but also had to answer the questions of domestic economy. How much to pay servants, which ship to take across the North Atlantic, how much food to bring for yourself on the voyage and of what type.[43] It is this domestic duty, the lingering effects of separate spheres, that pushes Moodie and her sister Catharine Parr Traill (1802-99) into intimate contact with Indigenous peoples in North America. It is also, I argue, why those depictions — which are certainly kinder than those in male-authored guides — disappear from their writing as they move from the frontier into more settled areas. In other words, I read what Corinne Bigot calls Moodie's and Traill's "interest in their [Indigenous] neighbours as individuals" as a product of necessity and need, as fulfilling the generic expectations of writing a colonial emigration guide rather than as an expression for

[40] The "comma-shaped bacteria" arrived, like most other newcomers to Canada, on Grosse Île in 1832, having "journeyed from India, by way of Afghanistan, Russia, Germany, and Britain, killing tens of thousands along the way" (Saunt 145-6).
[41] During the rebellions of 1837, according to historian David Cannadine, "an American had been killed by Canadian troops on American soil" (226). In response, the United States government arrested a Canadian, Alexander McLeod, though he was eventually acquitted and released. Various border disputes from the Atlantic to Pacific coasts would also wax and wane before the border was set at the forty-ninth parallel.
[42] As Elaine Freedgood argues, "Anglophone Canadian fiction and travel writing of the nineteenth century was not usually read by Canadians, but rather by Britons in Britain, who might or might not be prospective Canadians" (393).
[43] Some contain full tables of prices for household goods and produce which, owing to the difficulties in adjusting for inflation from pre-decimilization currency, are frustratingly difficult to parse.

intercultural curiosity or solidarity. In contrast, toward the end of the chapter, I turn to the Irish writer Anna Jameson (1794-1860) and the American Ojibwe poet and translator Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (1800-42) to consider other means of recording Indigenous knowledge. Throughout this chapter, I turn to Indigenous and First Nations scholars to inform my reading of these texts.

Coming to Canada

Neither Moodie nor Traill were prepared for their lives in Canada. Moodie, in particular, would later scoff at her own ill-preparedness. She could not cook or clean or do many of the necessary daily chores that, instead, fell to her servants. She is once left alone for a week when her maid leaves to visit her family. Moodie is "determined to try my unskilled hand" at cleaning her child's clothes and, "in a few minutes [had] rubbed the skin off my wrists, without getting the clothes clean" (*Bush Vol. I*, 105). She wrote *Roughing It,* she says, to prevent others from suffering as she did. "[I]f this book is regarded not as a work of amusement but one of practical experience," she writes,

> it will not fail to convey some useful hints to those who have contemplated emigration to Canada: the best country in the world for the industrious and well-principled man, who really comes out to work, and to better his condition by the labour of his hands; but a gulf of ruin to the vain and idle, who only set foot upon these shores to accelerate their ruin. (*Bush Vol. II*, 174)

It is both a statement that encapsulates an individualist view of social mobility and a summary of the demands of the genre. The text should provide "some useful hints," Moodie writes. As I will show those hints include particular depictions of First Nations people and implicit arguments as to the proper relationships between the Indigenous and Europeans settlers.

Moodie traveled to Canada with her husband, J.W.D. Moodie in 1832 after her brother had already relocated to North America. Author of a poetry volume published before her departure from England (*Enthusiasm and Other Poems*, 1832), as well as several children's books, Moodie would eventually add both novels and memoirs to her impressive range of genres. The Moodies did not have reliable income or the means to stay in Britain. They — like tens of thousands of their countrymen — considered their options abroad. They could move to South Africa, where John maintained a farm, but, according to Michael Peterman, in his introduction to *Roughing It*, Moodie "was not attracted to life in so remote and dangerous a place, especially as John had described it in his manuscript" (x). [44] Instead, Moodie and her husband chose Canada, where Moodie's brother, Samuel Strickland, had moved several years earlier. As they prepared to leave, Moodie's sister Catharine Parr (1802-1899) surprised the family by marrying a friend of John's. Like John, Thomas Traill was an Orkney man who had also served in the 21st Royal Scotch Fusiliers. Neither couple was prepared for the kind of lives they would lead in Canada and their failings and falters would inspire them to write, along with the promise of an enraptured and paying audience in Britain and the United States. The Canada that Moodie found was harsh. As Peterman summarizes, "There were no safety nets and few handouts" (43). Though communal "bees," in which groups of settlers would help erect buildings or quick clear land in exchange for food and drink, were a standard feature of European settlement in Canada, "a man needed a reliable occupation in order to support himself and his family" (Peterman 43). Moodie and her sister wanted to pass along the hard lessons they learned about agriculture, about political economy, and about the Canadians whom they met: both Indigenous and European.[45]

[44] From here, I will refer to Susanna simply as Moodie and will specify J.W.D. Moodie when I speak about her husband.

[45] In an odd bit of hyperbole, Moodie writes that, "There are no children in Canada" (Vol. I, 105). Beavan writes similarly of those born in North American, describing children as "not the careless frolicsome beings

Indeed, Moodie and Traill had already consumed a particular vision of the First Nations in British North America before they ever left Britain. The area known as Upper Canada was, according to Bigot, "already a *topos*, a set of references, and the Indians a construction, drawn from books, paintings, or travellers' accounts" (100, emphasis in original). Moodie and Traill and other mid-century writers had inherited the Romantic tropes of the "disappearing American" and the "Noble savage." As Michael Hutchings argues, this view was built upon eighteenth-century notions of stadial theory and of "improvement," more broadly. "According to proponents of improvement," Hutchings writes, "forest-dwelling societies were morally vicious and ignoble largely because they derived their sustenance from the hunting of wild animals" (50). In other words, Western European intellectuals — and, in Hutchings' view, members of the Scottish Enlightenment specifically — equated civilization and progress with the advent of agriculture. More bluntly, as Tony Ballantyne summarizes, stadial theory describes "the development of human communities from rudeness to 'refinement'" (9). Thus, dispossession and deforestation were inextricably linked as parts of a system of settlement and progress in which "Indigenous people would be removed from their hunting grounds; forests would be cleared; wetlands drained; and roads, canals, and railways constructed" (Hutchings 108). It is a worldview in which the telos of progress can justify any number of crimes against the First Nations. For Moodie and Traill, these tropes and depictions inform their writing, though with varying degrees of destabilization according to the genres in which they wrote.

These terms become apparent in Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada* from 1836. Traill saw her own work as a necessary correction to the overly effusive guides already circulating —

they are in other countries, but are here more truly miniature men and women, looking, as the Yankees express it, as if they had all cut their 'eye teeth'" (37).

most of them written by men.[46] Those earlier works, Traill argues, "conclude[ ] … that Canada is a land of Canaan … and advises all persons who would be independent and secure from want to emigrate" (*Backwoods* 78). Traill herself does not question that Canada *might* be a new Canaan; rather, she emphasizes "that these advantages are the result of long years of unremitting and patient labour; that these things are the *crown*, not the *first-fruits* of the settler's toil" (*Backwoods* 78, emphasis in original). Yes, Canada can be a land of milk and honey, but only after you tend the cows and the bees, only after clearing the forests and pastures, only after the monotonous, daily work required to transform forests into farms. What is lost, or purposely silenced, in the metaphor of New Canaan is the voice of the Canaanites; in this instance the First Nations peoples living in what would become Canada.

In some of the male-authored guides, the First Nations seem like phantoms, blinking in and out of existence at the edges of perception. In Evans' text, for example, he writes with detachment about the First Nations: "They are a rambling, unsettled people, and pay little attention to agriculture: some experiments have been tried by the formation of settlements for them, and so far they have answered the expectation of the persons who benevolently lent their countenance and aid to the undertaking" (13). These are *a* people, in Evans' writing, not people; a bloc worthy of noting but not of meeting, a site for anthropological appraisal rather than personal inquiry. As Carole Gerson articulates, the Indigenous in the middle of the nineteenth century were, for many Europeans, "visible as a generalization but usually invisible as an individual human being" (525).[47] Likewise, in his *Statistical Sketches*, Dunlop writes just briefly of the First Nations, with a passing reference to the Mississauga leader and Christian convert

[46] Writing in 1930, on the occasion of a new edition of Traill's *Backwoods*, the Canadian critic Henry Shelley wrote, "It would be difficult to find a book" that is "more representative of the Canada of the past" (354).
[47] Gerson also notes that writers often compared the Indigenous to the Roma, a trope in some of Traill's work, as well as Anna Jameson's and Joseph Pickering's, among others.

Peter Jones or Kahkewaquonaby and in a story about the abundant Eastern moles "making a meal on the upper lip of an unfortunate Scotchman" who was part of an expedition "who raised a cry that waked the whole camp, under the conviction that Indians had made a night attack on them" (35). It is supposed to be a joke at the expense of the Scotsman, [48] but it is also one of many, many descriptions that reduce the First Nations to animals. These writers also employed the now familiar trope of the disappearing American, in which the First Nations, in the words of Hester Blum, are "made pathetic, distant, and inevitable in [their] twilight" (10). Sometimes, these depictions were subtle. At other times, the language was genocidal in scope. I reproduce the language here not to dwell in its viciousness but to consider Moodie's and Traill's depictions of Indigenous people within its proper historical discourse. In an article for *Blackwood's* in 1832, the author asks,

> Are the aboriginal savages all dead? Most of them – but not all – for to go to the Chippawa [sic] hunting country, for instance, and you may yet see a tomahawk—nay, get yourself, without much difficult, scalped by a red man. But rifles have slain their thousands, and rum its tens of thousands, and rare now is a sight of the blanket with its yellow strings. This is as it should be. Nature abhors the independence of man.[49]

The women's texts I examine are not devoid of these kind of depictions,but they chart new territory in depicting the First Nations as people capable of agency, specifically in their emigration guides. This disparity echoes Duncan Bell's description of liberal empire as "a loaded encounter between abstract universalism and the concrete lifeworlds of other peoples" (26-7). The abstracted, symbolic violence that a writer such as Evans can commit against the First

[48] The intensification of the Highland clearances and the turn, in Scotland, to grazing meant that some landlords were willing to pay to relocate their tenants to Canada. For more, see Rudy (76-9).
[49] "Upper Canada, by a Backwoodsman." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 32, no. 197, 1832, pg. 238. *ProQuest*.

Nations does not fit with Traill's, or her sister's narrative or — importantly — their needs or the needs of the genre in which Traill and Moodie were writing. And while I assert that Moodie's and Traill's portrayals of First Nations are more nuanced than sometimes thought, even these nuanced depictions ultimately serve the broader colonizing project in Canada. The fiction attempts, to borrow a phrase from Leela Gandhi, to produce imperialism's "fantasy of discrete binarization" (3). The memoirs, however, display the impossibility of such distinctions, the "irremediable leakiness of imperial boundaries" (Gandhi 3). To *imagine* a Canadian future, they relied on tropes that excised the First Nations presence while, in their day-to-day lives, they relied on the First Nations themselves to survive.[50] I do not aim to argue for these writers' anti-racism or anti-imperialism. Rather, I show that these differing modes — these genres — supported different objectives of the broader imperial mission. To do so, I will use their fiction to establish the kinds of depictions of First Nations people typical of the period before turning to the more nuanced treatment in the colonial guides.

First Nation voices were silent and silenced by these writers, absences that were then enshrined by decades of literary criticism that equally failed to consider Indigenous peoples. A 1972 article by Carl Ballstadt — reprinted in the 2007 Norton edition of *Roughing It* — credits Moodie's text as "the one most often quoted when the historian, literary or social, needs commentary on backwoods people, frontier living conditions, or the difficulty of adjustment experienced by such upper middle-class immigrants" (419-20). As Gerson notes, however, the editor of the 1962 version of *Roughing It* published by the New Canadian Library, excised

[50] For a similar discourse, see "Australia to Paraguay: race, class, and poetry in a South American colony," by Jason Rudy, Aaron Bartlett, Lindsey O'Neil and myself.

sections in which Moodie describes her First Nations friends and acquaintances. This, according to Gerson, "resulted in the failure of all critics using this text" (525).

The Sisters' Fiction

I begin with Traill's — and, to a lesser extent, Moodie's — fiction to reveal the legacy of the Romantic characterizations of Indigenous peoples as doomed. Traill's *Canadian Crusoes* (1850) and Moodie's *Matrimonial Speculations* (1854), among other fictional work, have received much less critical attention. Surely, one reason is that the emigration guides serve both a literary and historiographical function; in them, we are witness to the expansion of the Canadian frontier through a singular lens and the use of sketches and vignettes provide easily digestible forms of colonial literature that are especially easy to excerpt. There is, however, also the question of quality. While readers across the Atlantic reveled in *Roughing It in the Bush*, with one reviewer praising, "We have seldom come across a book more amusing in its quiet humour, or more touching in its simple pathos, than these pictures of an emigrant's life in Canada"[51] — the response to the novels was less than tepid. As one contemporary reviewer summarized, "When Mrs. Moodie leaves off her 'roughings in the bush' she becomes coarse, without any spirit of fun or humour to redeem this hard quality. 'Matrimonal Speculations' is below the mark of even the most ordinary stories at present published; inferior to those that appear weekly in cheap periodicals."[52]

Others were less kind. A reviewer called Moodie's novel *The World Before Them* (1868) "both feeble and garrulous …. Its men and women are suggestive of real flesh and blood about as

[51] "Art. VIII.-Roughing it in the Bush; Or, Life in Canada." *The English Review*, vol. 17, no. 34, 1852, pg. 379. *ProQuest*.
[52] "Matrimonial Speculation." *The Athenaeum*, no. 1414, 1854, pg. 1462. *ProQuest*.

much as oil-paintings are of their originals, and no more."[53] That Moodie seemed uninterested in depicting Canada in her fiction could not have helped. In her *Matrimonial Speculations* from 1854, when two characters do move to British North America, Moodie's narrator advises the readers that the story will not "follow our emigrants in their voyage across the great waters, or describe their first settlement in the backwoods of Canada, I reserve all these for another story, and another place" (70). And while Peterman calls her novel *Flora Lyndsay; or, Passages in an Eventful Life* (1854) "a prequel" to *Roughing It* and a "lightly fictionalized" version of her own experiences emigrating from Scotland to Canada, Moodie's text does not mention the Indigenous inhabitants of Canada (xi). The novel does contain references to Moodie's involvement with anti-slavery societies, but Moodie's fictional alter ego never mentions Canada's Indigenous people, an absence that Peterman likewise overlooks in his introduction. Traill, however, draws on her experiences in Canada and her knowledge of the First Nations for the 1850 children's adventure novel, *The Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains*.

As the name implies, *The Canadian Crusoes* tells the story of three white settler children — Hector and Catherine, half-French, half Scottish siblings, and their French-Canadian cousin Louis — who find themselves lost in the frontier and who, to survive, must hunt, fish, and build shelter. The children rescue a First Nations woman seemingly abandoned by her people, whom they christen "Indiana." As Gerson helpfully summarizes, "Indiana devotes herself to their comfort and safety, learns English, converts to Christianity, and after they are rescued, marries" one of the boys (535).[54] In form, it is an unremarkable romance adventure, as the children play at

[53] "The World before them: A Novel." *The Athenaeum*, no. 2097, 1868, pp. 16. *ProQuest*.
[54] Gerson, reading through some of Canada's earliest poets — Isabella Valancy Crawford, Adam Kidd, Alexander McLachlan, Duncan Campbell Scott —finds that "[t]he figure of the disappearing American … allowed them to construct freely Native characters whose fictionality serves the ideology of British-Canadian supremacy" (525).

settler colonialism with rather forthright lessons from the narrator. The racism displayed toward the First Nations is unremarkable and unsurprising. For instance, one of the characters notes that the Ojibwe people often place their tents much closer to low-lying marshes or swamps than Europeans would: "[t]his either arises from stupidity or indolence, perhaps from both, but it is no doubt the cause of much of the sickness that prevails among them" (*Crusoes*, 299). It is a deflection, a rebuttal to the fact that Europeans brought diseases with them.[55]

Traill sets the novel in the early years of the nineteenth century, when, as she writes, the Rice Plains around the Great Lakes were "an unbroken wilderness," with few inhabitants, besides the "wandering hunting tribes of wild Indians" (*Crusoes* 14). By pushing the setting back to the time when a city such as Cobourg "was but a village in embryo," Traill reframes the subsequent Indigenous land dispossession and territorial loss as inevitable but also invisible. "What will not time and the industry of man, assisted by the blessing of a merciful God, effect?" (*Crusoes* 14-5) she rhetorically asks. In a piercing article about the novel, Elaine Freedgood argues that a work such as Traill's "makes known that which we do not want to know about our world but which we must know at some level, or at some moments" (394). It is an apt description of the underlying settler colonial logic and, by extension, the telos of expansion and exploitation that characterizes both the actions of the characters in the novel and the lessons explicitly stated by the narrator. Certainly, as Bigot argues, the novel depicts "how necessary it is for the white teenagers to change and become more like the Indian girl if they want to survive" the trials of

[55] By later in the century, at least, the leaders of the London Missionary Society were aware of the dangers, writing in the 1870 annual report that "in many of the South Sea Islands, the population converted to Christianity has decreased instead of increasing" before admitting, "There seems to be some fearful mortality that always attends the first appearance of contagious diseases in the midst of nations amongst whom those diseases do not, as in Europe, permanently abide."

being lost in the wilderness (107). However, it is more accurate to say that Indiana, the Indigenous girl, must become Christianized and Westernized for her to survive at all.

Canadian Crusoes is part of a long legacy of robinsonades.[56] Like DeFoe's titular hero, Andrew O'Malley argues, the European children in *Crusoes* "name or rename islands and other geographical features like lakes, stake their claim to the land by farming it, and rescue, then undertake the civilizing and Christianizing of an Aboriginal character" (70). O'Malley locates *Crusoes* at the intersection of imperial, masculinist discourse and "the feminized register of the domestic story" (71). In other words, he argues, "the book also presents us with a detailed model of home life, reproducing the domestic ideology that emerged out of eighteenth-century British middle-class culture" (78). That reproduction of domesticity involves, as O'Malley writes, Indiana being "baptized and domesticated, as it were" (80). O'Malley then credits Traill, writing that "her model of assimilation is far removed from the genocidal fantasies DeFoe's Crusoe entertains … and [*Canadian Crusoes*] employs a model that can be described as 'accommodation' in the making of a new home in the colony" (80). However, we cannot separate so easily the "genocidal fantasies" of DeFoe from the system of cultural assimilation endorsed by *Canadian Crusoes* and practiced in Canada. As I write this chapter, the system of residential schooling in Canada — inspired partly by the Carlisle School in the United States — has faced a massive reckoning, as the bodies of hundreds of First Nations children have been found buried on school grounds.

The most arresting trope in Traill's novel, which also appears in Beavan and others, is a reference to the First Nations' silence. As Traill's narrator opines toward the end of *Canadian*

[56] As Parker notes, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's father, John Johnston, was deserted by his guides when he first traveled to Canada from Ireland and "drew on his reading by comparing his plight to the fate of Robinson Crusoe" (7).

Crusoes, "The Indian must also yield to circumstance; he submits patiently. Perhaps he murmurs in secret; but his voice is low, it is not heard; he has no representative in the senate to take interest in his welfare, to plead in his behalf" (*Crusoes*, 322-3). Even in context, the line is ambivalent. Is it a recognition of the inherent inequities created by Canada's white supremacist government? Is it melancholic? Stoic? The genre — the romance — limits any reparative readings of Traill's text. As fitting with the generic expectations, the four characters become two couples, who, according to Gerson, "represent[ ] a blending of Canada's British, French and Native heritages, the latter two subsumed into the dominant while, English-speaking order" (536). It is the tale of Canada as a white supremacist settler colony clumsily allegorized.[57]

By the 1830s, the First Nations had suffered decades of violent dispossession and deceit by successive European settler colonial governments. Though the relationships between the Anglo-Canadian government, First Nations people, and the settler publics was varied and complicated by specific regional contexts, there are some shared features. Broadly, Hutchings writes, "D]uring the nineteenth century, many Indigenous groups continued to decline in the face of physical displacement, alcoholism, poverty, and other forms of slow violence" (187). The British and then Canadian governments signed 70 treaties with First Nations between 1701 and 1923. These treaties increasingly became land-grabs as the number of European settlers increased and, without substantial military conflict between Britain and the United States, the importance of Indigenous allies declined. Still, as Rudy notes, "[e]ven in the years leading up to" Confederation, "local colonial governments consistently held an Indigenous legal right to the land" (123). And unlike in the United States, there was not large-scale, armed conflicts between

[57] The stilted, *deus ex* ending was not new for Traill. Her great-niece and biographer quotes her reminiscing on a book she wrote as a child about William Tell: "I soon got my hero and heroine into an inextricable muddle, so fell out of love adventures altogether, and altering my plan ended by writing a juvenile tale …" (*Introduction*, xi).

First Nations and the British government in the first half of the nineteenth century.[58] Metaphorically, "First Nations provided settler colonial society with a figure against which it defined genuine citizenship" (Gettler 13).

In the opening to her *Sketches and Tales Illustrative of Life in the Backwoods of New Brunswick* (1845), the author Emily Beavan (1818-1897) apologizes that "Of political, or depth of topographical information, the writer claims no share, and much of deep interest, or moving incident, cannot now be expected in the life of a settler in the woods" (1). Like many nineteenth-century women writers, Beavan positions herself as an almost unwilling narrator of life in an imperial space, acknowledging that she has not had the same education as the men who wrote similar guides. Moodie performs a similar rhetorical disavowal in *Life in the Clearings Versus the Bush* (1852), attesting that her text is not and *cannot* be a political one, arguing, "[a]s a woman, I cannot enter into the philosophy of these things, nor is it my intention to do so" (50). As I have argued throughout this dissertation, women writers often used these statements to mask what was, otherwise, an explicitly political text. For instance, let us examine the rest of the line I quoted from Beavan. She argues that life in New Brunswick lacks "moving incident" because, "The days when the war-whoop of the Indian was yelled above the burning ruins of the white man's dwelling are gone – their memory exists but in the legend of the winter's eve, and the struggle is now with the elements which form the climate" (1-2).[59] Finding reliable demographic statistics for First Nations people is difficult for a variety of reasons — including the complicated ways that the current Canadian government gauges whether someone can claim

[58] After confederation, Louis Riel would lead a largely Metis rebellion in the West. And, as Thomas King points out, there were events such as 1858 Fraser Canyon War, though he adds, wryly, "But all this fighting happened before British Columbia was a legal part of Canada, so I suppose we shouldn't count it" (27).
[59] For a closer critical reading of this passage and more about the rhetoric of credibility, see Chapter I.

First Nations or Indigenous identity.[60] Nevertheless, Beavan's statements were not meant as reliable remarks about demography but arguments for Canada's future. In other words, Beavan's statements were *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive*. She writes on the following page that the First Nations were "the ancient possessors of the soil: of these last there now remains but a fast-fading remnant – objects more of pity or laughter than of dread" (2). They silently haunt Canada, in other words, a line of thinking that surfaces again and again in these colonial memoirs.

The sisters' view of the First Nations becomes more apparent in surprising moments. Traill narrates a story from their childhood in Norwich in which the Strickland siblings decided to build a tent to sleep outside. When their father "beheld our building for the first time he observed … 'These children have built a hut exactly like an Indian wigwam'" (*Narratives of Nature* 130). Reflecting on this, Traill writes, "My sisters and I knowing nothing of the rules of either modern or ancient architecture, formed our hut on the precise plan of our ancient forefathers' primitive dwellings; in pretty nearly the same style as is still observed by the savages of the South Sea Islands, and by the Indians of North America" (*Narratives of Nature 133-4)*. Such statements reflected both Traill's personal view of the First Nations people as childish and childlike and broader trends in British intellectual circles that imagined the peoples of the world were all on the same teleological timeline, just at different points of technological and societal sophistication.

[60] Indeed, one of the complaints in the *Report on the Indians of Upper Canada* from the Aborigine Protection Society in 1839 was "the absence or defect of census" of First Nations people. It was one of the "evils requiring an immediate remedy" to know "whether the native people increase or diminish under [British] influence" (1).

BACKWOODS AND *ROUGHING IT*

In some ways, it is disingenuous to categorize Moodie and Parr Traill's texts as Canadian literature. Canada is the *object* of their writing, certainly, but their audience was in London and New York, Edinburgh and Buffalo. As Peterman notes in his critical introduction to *Roughing It*, the text was not published in Canada until 1871, but "was a best seller in Britain and the United States immediately upon its first release" (vii). This makes some sense. While readers across the Anglophone world could enjoy the tales of Moodie's sinister neighbor, whom she nicknames "Old Satan," or stories of the peculiar and ill-suited frontiersman, Tom Wilson, only a particular class of people needed the more immediate and material advice. Who needs to read which ship is best for crossing the North Atlantic once they have safely arrived in Quebec? Similarly, these texts have a specific class in mind: those wealthy enough to afford to emigrate *and* purchase land, but too poor to live comfortably in Great Britain.

Certainly, as Bina Freiwald notes, "By coming to Canada, Moodie becomes a permanent exile" (486). Her writing turns our attention westward, to the ever-expanding British North American empire, while her own gaze is set East, back to the country she left so reluctantly. Moodie "was at best a hesitant emigrant," Peterman writes ("Introduction," xi). Traill, in her *Emigrants Guide*, acknowledges the class discrepancy, writing "It is much regretted that the high price of these volumes places the work out of the power of the poorer class of the settlers, who would have found much that was practically useful to them" (54). It is a disjunction of the genre. Nevertheless, these texts and, in the words of Mary Ellen Kappler, "the *tableau* of the genteel Englishwoman confronting the wilderness has acquired iconic status [and] … ha[s] formed the substructure of a great deal of modern thought about Canadian national identity" (71, emphasis

in original).[61] Peterson argues that Moodie's texts show a woman "obsessed with establishing a model British home on the North American frontier" (62). Or, more bluntly, Frye describes Moodie as "a British army of occupation in herself, a one-woman garrison" (239). Frye's militaristic metaphor is both hyperbolic and apt.

For all these reasons, it is a mistake to characterize Moodie's and Traill's texts as travel literature. It is true that, as Bigot writes, "[t]he sisters adopted the stance of the traveller, and their accounts are indeed typical scenes" of what Mary Louise Pratt called "contact zones" (101). And, yet, such a generic distinction does not fully capture the breadth and scope of Moodie's and Traill's writing. Bigot compares the narrative stance of Traill and Moodie to the traveler and writer Mungo Park, who positioned himself "as the object of the other's gaze and curiosity" (101). But I would argue for a more materialist lens. In other words, the curiosity that Bigot imagines as characteristic of Traill's nature writing can be more easily explained by Traill's interest in exploiting natural resources and learning enough from the First Nations to ensure her and her family's survival. They were writing guides for future settlers, not tips for temporary visitors.

Moodie, her husband, their daughter, and two servants —Hannah and James[62]—arrive in Canada in the throes of a cholera outbreak. They move into a shack in late Fall with no real preparations for the oncoming Canadian winter. And, yet, as Moodie writes, the true danger in Canada is other people. The Irish emigrants are riotous and uncouth. The Americans, or Yankees as she calls them, are nearly all untrustworthy, from the neighbors who abuse Moodie's kindness

[61] Northrop Frye's collection of essays, reviews, and lectures about Canadian literature, *The Bush Garden*, takes its name from Atwood's imaginative, if not particularly historically useful, poetic rewriting of Moodie's life.

[62] Servants seem to come and go in the text, with the occasional reflection on their leaving but often without a word. The names just change.

— by "borrowing" clothes, food, tools, and anything else they spy in the one-room home — to the dishonest land speculators and squatters. A man whom Moodie refuses to name attempts to steal the family's bull and, when her husband finds it and reclaims it, the man conspires to drive the family's "six fat hogs" into the nearby lake. "The death of these animals deprived us of three barrels of pork, and half starved us through the winter" (*Vol. II*, 94). Likewise, not only was she ignorant as to how to milk a cow, she writes that, in the early years of her stay in Canada, "I was terribly afraid of cattle" (Vol. I, 150). One of Moodie's ruder neighbors delights in this ignorance: "*Afraid of cows!* Lord bless the woman! A farmer's wife, and afraid of cows!" (Vol. I, 151, emphasis in original). Moodie writes that, even after moving further into the country, "[i]t was long, very long, before I could discipline my mind to learn and practice all the menial employments which are necessary in a good settler's wife" (*Vol. II*, 51).

Throughout, Moodie flirts with the settler-colonial logic of *Terra Nullius*. She recalls, for instance, a neighbor who helps the Moodies move from their relatively suburban first farm further into "the backwoods," who dismisses Moodie's superstitions. "Ghosts! There are no ghosts in Canada …. The country is too new for ghosts" (*Backwoods Vol. II* 15). Moodie then writes, "[t]he 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" (*Backwoods Vol. II* 16). Traill, similarly, writes of the early years in Canadian settlement as "a time when the backwoodsman shared the almost unbroken wilderness with the unchristianized Indian, the wolf and the bear" (*Emigrant's Guide* 29). Frye once retorted, in an early essay about Canadian poetry, that "Canada is not 'new' or 'young': it is exactly the same age as any other country under a system of industrial capitalism" (137). While Frye is, helpfully, attempting to dismiss

views like Moodie's that Canada had no history, his statement equally flattens any distinctiveness of the First Nations history.

The first reference to the Indigenous in Moodie's text is, strikingly, as a referential cudgel to use against the Irish emigrants. Moodie and her husband are aghast at the "violent and extraordinary gestures" of the newly arrived Irish on Grosse Île, whom she calls "hard-featured, sun-burnt harpies" (*Roughing It Vol.* I 9).[63] She continues, "I have heard and read much of savages, and have since seen, during my long residence in the bush, somewhat of uncivilized life; but the Indian is one of Nature's gentleman — he never says or does a rude or vulgar thing" (*Roughing It Vol. I* 9). As Gerson describes, Moodie's depiction of the Indigenous "combine condescension and respect" (532). What appears as nuance, perhaps borne of Moodie's close, interpersonal relationships with First Nations people, still serves to support Moodie's mid-century white supremacy. Still ruminating on the ideas of graves and hauntings in a later work, Moodie writes, "The white man has so completely supplanted his red brother, that he has appropriated the very spot that held his bones; and in a few years their dust will mingle together, although no stone marks the grave where the red man sleeps" (*Clearings Versus Bush,* 18). This is supposed to be an image of brotherhood; their ashes mix together in the fertile Canadian soil to nurture something new.[64] But it is actually a claim of replacement, one cloaked in a metaphor from Genesis. And, importantly, Moodie notes that "no stone marks the grave where the red man sleeps." In her imagined Canadian future, the First Nations are not even remembered. Or, as Gettler articulates, Moodie's image here is part of a settler-colonialism that works "through the

[63] There is a now a memorial to Irish emigrants on Grosse Île, which was the "entry into Canada" for tens of thousands of immigrants between the 1830s and 1930s. In a 1968 republication of John and Moodie's short-lived periodical, *The Victoria Magazine,* critic William H. New characterizes this moment on the island as "nicely anticipat[ing] the shattered illusions which the book as a whole was to detail" (ix).
[64] See Chapter 4 for a similar motif in Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Peter*.

erasure of the colonized, whether by way of legal doctinres such as *terra nullius,* the physical violence of genocide, or settler claims to indigeneity" (14). If the ashes of the Europeans and the First Nations are so fully intermingled, then who is the true inheritor of Canada?

Still, Moodie's and Traill's texts contain inviting pictures of the First Nations. It is, as I have argued, the result of the women's domestic duties, particularly when Moodie tells the story of an Indigenous man quite literally saving the Moodies from starvation. "I have said before that the Indian never forgets a kindness," Moodie writes, proceeding to tell of a time when she and her husband "could scarcely obtain bread for ourselves and our little ones" (*Vol. I* 46). In their most desperate times, John Nogan "would bring a fine bunch of ducks, and drop them at my feet 'for the papouse'" — meaning the Moodie's youngest child — "or leave a large [muskellunge] on the sill of the door, or place a quarter of venison just within it" (*Vol. I* 46). More importantly, however, Moodie adds that Nogan would leave these gifts "and then slip away without saying a word, thinking that receiving a present from a poor Indian might hurt our feelings, and he would spare us the mortification of returning thanks" (*Vol. I* 46). It is an odd moment in the narrative, one on which Moodie does not dwell; the subsequent paragraphs are about Indigenous mourning practices. The most critical fact Moodie reveals is that her family's survival did, at times, rely on the kindness of the First Nations. When the Moodies were "withering beneath the iron grasp of poverty," it was John Nogan who provided sustenance, not Moodie's brother, nor the Traills, nor any of the other European settlers with whom the Moodies cultivated relationships in the early years of their immigration (*Vol. I* 46). Yet, their savior also acts silently, unseen. His gifts are received and he exits the scene. Even he, the text implies, understands that his gift upsets the racial and social hierarchy imposed by the European settlers.

This is, in all likelihood, partly hyperbolic. Both *Roughing It in the Bush* and *Life in the Clearings* contain sections that detail the Moodies' complicated financial dealings and the amount of debt they accumulated to survive.[65] And neither the Moodies nor the Traills were ever able to live comfortably in the wilderness. The Moodies did not achieve financial stability until John enlisted to fight for the crown in the Rebellions of 1837-8[66] and was subsequently rewarded with a magistrate position in Peterborough. Still, it is telling that in an anecdote in which John Nogan's generosity helps the Moodies survive the harshest years of their pioneering experiment, Moodie still refers to him as a "poor Indian" (*Vol. I* 46). As Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in her groundbreaking *Braiding Sweetgrass*, for the peoples of the Great Lakes region, "[f]ood was meant to be shared, no politeness needed" (52). Nogan was "poor" only according to the settler logic in which "land was property, real estate, capital, or natural resources" (Kimmerer 17).

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, Moodie's section on the Indigenous also includes the kind of physical descriptions, which I will not reproduce here, that paint them as physically and intellectually inferior. It is language that would fit nicely with more explicitly white supremacist notions of race and racial genealogy popular at the turn of the century. Even so, the chapter is not one of pure phrenological disdain. Moodie writes, "Scarcely a week passed away without my being visited by the dark strangers; and as my husband never allowed them to eat with the servants, but brought them to his own table, they soon grew friendly and communicative" (*Vol. II*

[65] Like many other European immigrants, the Moodies quickly amassed a debt to a local shop owner. As John Thurston summarized in 1991, "At each stage, [Moodie's] career was directly and indirectly connected with her social and economic position: it provided the possibility of improving that position through material return and social recognition; it constituted the site of her struggle to reconcile herself to that position" (xiii-xiv).

[66] The historian Maxime Dagenais summarizes the conflict as "pitt[ing] reformers in Lower and Upper Canada against a local conservative elite" (3) – which included John Moodie. The rebellion was short lived and its leaders escaped to American border towns, where they drew supporters but were easily defeated when they returned to Canada.

28). Why was such fraternization not allowed in the Moodie household? The generous reading, which Moodie implies, is that the Indigenous were considered honored guests in their household. She continues, writing the First Nations "would point to every object that attracted their attention" — including engravings, prints, maps, and "a curious Japanese sword" gifted by a friend — "asking a thousand questions as to its use, the material of which it was made, and if we were inclined to exchange it for their commodities?" (*Vol. II* 28). What is not stated as plainly is that John had an equal interest in the First Nations crafts. In detailing how her First Nations friends seemed oddly fond of the Japanese sword, Moodie writes,

> Had I demanded a whole fleet of canoes for my Japanese sword, I am certain they would have agreed to the bargain. The Indian possesses great taste, which is displayed in the carving of his paddles, in the shape of his canoes, in the elegance and symmetry of his bows …. It is almost impossible for a settler to imitate to perfection an Indian's cherry-wood paddle. My husband made very credible attempts, but still there was something wanting — the elegance of the Indian finish was not there. (*Vol. II* 30)

Moodie casts herself as the one saving the First Nations from their own irrationality. She *could* have asked for all their canoes, if she wanted. She resists, she writes, the perfect paragon of virtue. But for a potential settler, this section is as much advice as ethnography. Bring trinkets and items of value, the text encourages, for which the Indigenous residents of Canada will trade away the land that has nourished their ancestors for millenia.

One of the most interesting moments in Moodie's narrative is when she describes how reluctant the First Nations people could be when asked to share their culture. It is also a rare moment in which First Nations are voiced rather than silent. She writes, "My husband was anxious to collect some of the native Indian airs, as they all sing well, and have a fine ear for

music, but all his efforts proved abortive" (*Vol. II*, 33). Moodie reproduces a scene between John Moodie and John Nogan:

> 'Cannot you give me a war song?'
> 'Yes, — but no good,' with an ominous shake of the head.
> 'A hunting-song?'
> 'No fit for white man,' — with an air of contempt. — 'No good, no good!'
> 'Do, John, sing us a love-song,' said I, laughing, 'if you have such a thing in your language.'
> 'Oh! much love-song—very much—bad—bad—no good for Christian man. Indian song no good for white ears.' (*Vol. II,* 33-4)

As readers interested in *recovering* lost voices, we might share in Moodie and her husband's frustration at John Nogan's refusal to share his songs, mourning the possibility that they might have been documented. But as I have asked, was this a moment of genuine curiosity, or was it, to borrow phrasing from Linda Tuhiwai Smith, part of a desire "to extract and claim ownership" of Indigenous "ways of knowing, [Indigenous] imagery" while "simultaneously reject[ing] the people who created and developed those ideas" (1)? These scenes prompt us to ask at what point does John's and Moodie's interest graduate from curiosity to a more cynical appropriation? The answer, I argue, lies in silence. While Moodie writes ambiguously, if not appreciatively of her relationships with First Nations people while she's living in the "bush," these stories end when she moves to the "clearing" of Peterborough. The intimacy she achieved with First Nations people and of which she writes so proudly disappears when she and her husband move to a larger town. Instead of individuals with personalities, with agency, they become "the Indians." For instance, writing about a lake she visited, she reflects, "The Indians call this lake *Bessikákoon*, but I do not know the exact meaning of the word …. It is certain that an Indian girl is buried [there]; but I never could learn the particulars of her story, and perhaps there was no tale connected with it" (*Vol. II* 73). The distance evident in this passage calls to mind the male-authored guides from earlier in the century. Like them, Moodie now writes of the First Nations

not as persons but as a people.[67] Moodie is, in effect, following the generic confines of earlier guides.

Traill, like her sister, continued writing throughout her life in Canada, at least in part, according to biographers, to supplement the meager income that her husband earned as a retired officer. And while I agree with critics like Gerson that Traill's writing on the First Nations has a distinctive warmth, I argue that it is in her nonfiction texts that we see fully the settler logic and the animating telos of anglicization and assimilation. In her most famous book, *The Backwoods of Canada* (1846), she writes of visiting an Indigenous village near the Rice Lake, the setting of her *Canadian Crusoes*. As Traill describes the approach to Rice Lake, she mentions "several well-cultivated settlements; and beyond the Indian village, the missionaries have a school for the education and instruction of the Indian children" (*Backwoods* 51). Nowhere in this section, however, does she describe the "Indian village" itself; she moves elliptically in her description from the First Nations immediately to their Anglicization, writing "[m]any of [the First Nations children] can both read and write fluently, and are greatly improved in their moral and religious conduct. They are well and comfortably clothed, and have houses to live in. But they are still too much attached to their wandering habits to become good and industrious settlers" (*Backwoods, 51*). This strain of thought continues into her less well-known publication, *The Female Emigrant's Guide*, in which she reflects on how the country has changed in the nineteenth century. "These old settlers," she writes,

> have seen the forest disappear before the axe of the industrious emigrant; they have seen towns and villages spring up where the bear and the wolf had their lair. They have seen

[67] This distance eventually characterizes much of her writing. In *Life in the Clearings*, there is a subtle shift in tone from one of direct experience to one of aggregation. In just a few pages in a section detailing Canadian funerary practices, she uses the phrases "I have heard," "[a] doctor told me," "[a]n old lady told me," and "I heard" (*Clearings* 138-40).

the white-sailed vessel and the steamer plough those lakes and rivers where the solitary Indian silently glided over their lonely waters in his frail canoe. (*Emigrant's Guide*, 29) [68]

Gerson credits Moodie and Traill with a warmth toward the Indigenous that many other nineteenth-century writers did not share but, to borrow a phrase from Christopher Taylor's work about the West Indies, the First Nations "lived not in the warm glow of abolitionists' and political economists' hearts but with the effects induced by the institutional structures built by these intentions" (4).

I want to reflect on one more scene from Moodie's text before turning to Jane Johnston Schoolcraft and Anna Jameson. In a scene that Moodie casts as a joyous intercultural exchange, John shows several of the Mississauga people "a large map of Canada" to which "they were infinitely delighted" (*Roughing It Vol. II* 28). "In a moment they recognized every bay and headland in Ontario, and almost screamed with delight when, following the course of the Trent with their fingers, they came to their own lake" (*Roughing It Vol. II* 28). In a mix of casual racism, cultural curiosity, and melancholy, Moodie writes, "How eagerly each pointed out the spot to his fellows; how intently their black heads were bent down, and their dark eyes fixed upon the map! What strange, uncouth exclamations of surprise burst from their lips as they rapidly repeated the Indian names for every lake and river on this wonderful piece of paper!" (*Roughing It Vol. II* 28). Like other scenes in Moodie's and Traill's texts, this moment juxtaposes European and Indigenous knowledge. For Moodie, the land is an abstraction, which makes it easier to quantify and commodify. For the Indigenous, their experience of it — tracing the rivers with their fingers — is an unintended but fitting metaphor for their relation to it.

[68] In the United States, the steamer was not only the pinnacle of progress but also a tool in the decades-long process to dispossess Indigenous people. As Claudio Sant writes, "For White Americans, the steamboats that ferried goods and slaves, and now native peoples, up western rivers were potent symbols of empire and progress" (128-9).

And while geographic maps seem standard to us, it was another step in the process of alienating the Indigenous from their land. It was — and remains — "a problem," in the words of Indigenous writer and activist Winona LaDuke, "of two separate spiritual paradigms and one dominant culture — make that a dominant culture with an immense appetite for natural resources" (*Recovering the Sacred*, 14). Or, as Saunt writes of land-parceling projects in the United States, these maps were "anchored to the globe by invisible lines of longitude that were arbitrarily defined a thousand years after native peoples began farming in the region" (178). What maps could not show was a sense of Indigenous cosmology, the importance of relationality. "In Potawatomi," Kimmerer echoes, "we speak of the land as *emingoyak*: that which has been given to us. In English, we speak of the land as 'natural resources' … as if the lives of other beings were our property. As if the earth were not a bowl of berries, but an open pit mine, and the spoon a gouging shovel" (383, emphasis in original). What Moodie is actually describing, then, is a moment of loss. We do not hear the First Nations names for these lakes and rivers. It is a loss that Traill, at least, could articulate later in life. In a memoir she published in her 80s, she worries, specifically, about the loss of Indigenous languages, writing, "The Indian names are both descriptive and characteristic, and in some instances contain the germ of local or distinctive history, which chance or even mispronunciation would obliterate for ever" (*Pearls*, 180). But the sisters' writings, the genre of the colonial guide, is complicit in this obliteration.

JAMESON AND SCHOOLCRAFT

Anna Jameson presents a problem to literary historians and critics. She was an accomplished writer, and Hughes names her — along with George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, and others — as a writer who "demonstrate[d] what was possible to women writers" in the nineteenth

century (56). Trying to place Jameson on an ideological spectrum, however, can be difficult, particular in regard to her opinions of the Indigenous. Her three-part *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838) depicts her travels across Canada and, specifically, her time with Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and Jane Johnston Schoolcraft. Yet, the conflicted nature of Jameson's writing opens space for rethinking the relationship between colonial guides and Indigenous people. Moreover, if Traill's and Moodie's depictions of the First Nations were often characterized by Indigenous silence, then it was Anna Jameson who seemed to listen.

Jameson (1794-1860) came to Canada not as a hopeful pioneer, but as a partner in an unhappy marriage. She had married Robert Jameson in 1825 but soon separated. He immigrated to Canada and eventually became the Attorney General of Upper Canada.[69] Jameson was a remarkable writer with broad interests in art, religious iconography, and fiction who had also worked as a governess in continental Europe and wrote a novel based on that experience, *The Diary of an Ennuyée*, in 1836. Jameson published three volumes of her *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* in the late 1830s, which Hutchings characterizes as "a hybrid work of philosophy, literary criticism, and travel that nowadays is deservedly considered a landmark in Canadian literary history" (112). Indeed, while the three volumes purport to detail Jameson's travels throughout Canada and her time with First Nations peoples, they also contain long digressions about, for example, actresses in Vienna and an image of the Madonna that Jameson saw in the wilderness of Austria. As Hughes describes, *Summer Rambles* "merges literary criticism of German authors with intrepid adventures in canoes" (59).

Jameson brought a keen if cutting eye to British North America and could be vicious in her appraisals. While monitoring an assembly debate in Upper Canada, she comments, "With

[69] I will use "Jameson" to refer to Anna Jameson.

regard to the petition forwarded to the home government, it has been an ample source of ridicule that a house of parliament, of which so many members could not read, and many more could not spell, should be thus zealous on the subject of education" (*Vol. I* 30). Likewise, she writes that "a reasonable person might make himself very happy here, if it were not for some few things, among which, those Egyptian plagues, the flies and frogs in summer, and the relentless iron winter, are not the most intolerable" (*Vol. I* 223). Her image of the European émigré is, perhaps, best encapsulated by a description of an English printer and framemaker whom she meets. The man had brought drawings by Samuel Prout, William Hunt, and JMW Turner so that he might "hang them up in his house, though that house were a log hut, [so] that his children might have the pleasure of looking at them, and learn to distinguish what is excellent in its kind" (*Vol. I* 279). They have pretentions to a higher culture to which, in England, they likely had little access.

More interesting, however, is the time she spent with and the attention she paid to the First Nations. She asked to see the "annual distribution of presents to the Indians" by the governor of Upper Canada (*Vol. III* 2).[70] Her time among them, and with the Schoolcrafts, principally, takes up much of the third volume. What is so striking about Jameson's reflections on her time there is the distinct feelings of joy and curiosity in her writing. "I ran about the lovely shore," she writes, "and among the Indians, inexpressibly amused, and occupied, and excited by all I saw and heard" (Vol. III 37). Even when she presents material that she implies should be frightening or disconcerting, she undercuts those implications. She writes, for example, "I can now conceive what it must be to hear that shrill prolonged cry (unlike any sound I ever heard in my life before) in the solitude of the forest, and when it is the certain harbinger of death" (*Vol. III* 56). But then she clarifies, "But do not for a moment imagine that I feel *fear*, or

[70] For more about the gift system, see Gettler's *Colonialism's Currency*.

the slightest doubt of security; only a sort of thrill which enhances the enjoyment I have in these wild scenes" (*Vol. III* 56, emphasis in original). Unlike Beavan, who had to imagine the "war-whoop," Jameson hears it but is not afraid.

Yet, she was also a cultural elitist who traveled with copies of Shakespeare, Schiller, and Wordsworth and who believed, at times, in the inevitability of Indigenous decline. When considering the Westward expansion of the European settlers, for instance, she writes, somewhat mournfully, that "to oppose, or even to delay for a time, the rolling westward of the great tide of civilization, are like efforts to dam up the rapids of Niagara" (*Vol. II* 240). Moreover, she adds, echoing the European theorists who provided an intellectual foundation for the "disappearing American" trope, "The hunter must make way before the agriculturist, and the Indian must learn to take the bit between his teeth, and set his hand to the ploughshare, or *perish*" (*Vol. II 240;* emphasis in original). She then reflects, however, on the inadequacy of her own metaphors, calling into question the logic and the potential of any civilizing project.

> I am inclined to think that the idea of the Indians becoming what *we* call civilized people seems quite hopeless; those who entertain such benevolent anticipations should come here, and behold the effect which three centuries of contact with the whites have produced on the nature and habits of the Indian. The benevolent theorists in England should come and see with their own eyes that there is a bar to the civilization of the Indians, and the increase or even preservation of their numbers, which no power can overleap. (*Vol. II* 240-1)

For all the joy she finds when visiting with the Schoolcrafts, she also adds that when Schoolcraft talks about the First Nations, "there is a melancholy and pity in her voice, when speaking of them, as if she did indeed consider them a doomed race" (*Vol. III* 69-70). Perhaps her opinions,

as varied and sometimes contradictory as they are, can be summarized by lines from the second volume. “You must not imagine, after all I have said,” she writes,

> that I consider the Indians as an inferior race, merely because they have no literature, no luxuries, no steam-engines; nor yet, because they regard our superiority with the arts with a sort of lofty indifference, which is neither contempt nor stupidity, look upon them as cast beyond the pale of our sympathies. (*Vol. II* 273)

Even in her defense of the Indigenous, she relies on tropes that juxtapose a seeming technological sophistication with a cultural one. Indigenous cultural practices, then, appear in her text as a visible absence, just out of earshot.

In an otherwise effusive review of *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* in *The British and Foreign Review*, the reviewer is astonished at Jameson’s treatment of the Indigenous. In a rather circuitous argument, the reviewer argues that Jameson’s advocacy makes it impossible “to refrain from also inquiring into her personal stake in the cause she pleads so warmly” (137). The implication is unclear and left unsaid, before the reviewer states that they could not “pass over so salient a feature in her writings—above all, in this present book—without a general protest of grave and entire disapproval” (137).

Jameson had a particular affection for Jane Johnston Schoolcraft and Schoolcraft’s mother. Their intercourse is open, with Jameson occasionally asking Schoolcraft about odd legends or stories she has heard about Indigenous peoples. “I recollect, some years ago, meeting with a strange story of a north-west Indian hunter, who, on the sudden death of his wife in childbirth, had suckled his surviving infant. I asked Mrs. Schoolcraft if this could possibly be true? She said that the man belonged to her people, and that the fact was not doubted among them” (*Vol. III* 70). She writes about Schoolcraft more generally, “While in conversation with

her, new ideas of the Indian character suggest themselves; new sources of information are opened to me, such as are granted to few, and such as I gratefully appreciate" (*Vol. III* 69).[71] Throughout, there is a sense that Jameson has access to private information. Indeed, the third volume of Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* includes four Ojibwe stories from Schoolcraft. There remain aspects of Indigenous culture that Jameson wants to see and hear that she cannot. She writes that, "I am … bent on bringing you an Indian song, if I can catch one" (*Vol. III* 59). Like Moodie, Jameson seems unable to fully engage in Indigenous cultural practices. But is through reading Schoolcraft herself that allows us to rethink these more canonical texts.

While Moodie and Traill's colonial guides have enjoyed a certain acclaim since their publication, the writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft or Bamewawagezhikaquay were lost for decades. As Robert Dale Parker writes, in the introduction to a collection of Schoolcraft's poetry and stories, much of Schoolcraft's writing survived in a single copy of a magazine her husband, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, compiled between late 1826 and early 1827. It was another century before that writing came to the attention of critics. "Little known though she is," Parker asserts, "she often gets mentioned in the course of comments about her husband, her father, or her much-admired mother, but not mentioned as a writer" (1). Like many of the women in my dissertation, Schoolcraft is often studied for whom she knew and what she represented rather than what she wrote. She was, in Parker's words, "an Indian writer, a female writer, an Irish-American writer, a white writer, a métis writer" who witnessed the slow destruction of the liminal space in which she found herself, an "evolving and mobile space in the cultural landscape" that was neither

[71] A few pages later, she adds, in a clear slight against her Indigenous hosts, "The taciturnity of the Indians does not arise from any ideas of gravity, decorum, or personal dignity, but rather from the dearth of ideas and of subjects of interest" (*Vol. III* 86).

wholly Indigenous nor wholly European (71, 4).[72] I turn to Schoolcraft in this final section to think through different methods of sharing knowledge and the ethical implications of that knowledge. If, as I argue, the colonial guides are marked by Indigenous silence, then Schoolcraft allows us, as modern readers, to hear the stories of Indigenous people.

Schoolcraft's writing helps defamiliarize us from the versions of Canada in Moodie or Traill. In "To the Pine Tree," for instance, Schoolcraft celebrates her return from England to Turtle Island when she was just 10 years old. For the European writers, the journey across the North Atlantic was one of descent, into wilderness, into a lower social class, into the unknown. For Schoolcraft, however, the site of Indigenous flora is a reason to celebrate. As Parker narrates, "when, in crossing the Niagara ridge," Schoolcraft "saw the pine, she could not resist the expression of impassioned admiration" (90). Her celebration of the wild woods of Turtle Island reverses the rhetorical swipes at its uninhabitability that animate colonial guides. Instead of seeing the land as a poor imitation of Albion, Schoolcraft recognizes the trees as home.

> Not all the tress of England bright,
> Not Erin's lawns of green and light
> Are half so sweet to memory's eye,
> As this dear type of northern sky
> Oh 'tis to me a heart-sweet scene,
> The pine—the pine! that ever green (98, xiii-xviii)

Schoolcraft invokes a different temporality in the poem: while England's and Ireland's blooms wither in winter, the pine trees are "ever green" (xviii). Hutchings points to the juxtaposition between Schoolcraft's "delight" and the "white settlers … who labelled many pine forests 'barrens' on account of their perceived lack of fruitfulness and utility" (45).

[72] Her literary allusions display the breadth of her cultural knowledge. She begins a poem written as a response to her father, John Johnston, an Irishman, with the lines, "Who rides this Pegasus? The Hibernian/ On the spur of the moment from Mount Helicon" (130, i-ii, emphasis in original).

More pressing for my argument, however, is Schoolcraft's poem "'My humble present is a purse.'"[73] In it, she distills the essence of the reciprocal relationships between Indigenous peoples. It is as clear a statement of the philosophy of reciprocity that one might find. In the poem, the speaker announces that their gift is a purse, "Without, tis plain, and what is worse/ Within, 'tis empty too." (iii-iv). The poem's feminine endings point to Schoolcraft's sly humor, but, there is a futurity, a promise of a relationship in the purse and the poem. "This claim at least, I do aver/ And promise by this billet,/ Take you the purse tho' empty now,/ And when I can I'll fill it" (ix-xii). The purse, simple, plain, is the signifier of the promise. We might, then, reread John Nogan's acts of kindness in Moodie's *Roughing It* not as acts of charity or pity but rather acts of community. Schoolcraft shows us that it was the Moodies who did not fulfill the promise of community.

There is a similar lesson in the piece "Corn story (or the origin of corn)."[74] The story is both instructional, including details for growing corn wrapped in a fable, and encapsulates a particular Indigenous view of the land, one which Rozanne Gooding Silverwood summarizes as one of "collective stewardship" (279). Like some of Schoolcraft's other stories, this tale begins with a young man on the cusp of adulthood, wandering which direction his life will take. As the young man fasts and prays, a "very gaily and richly dressed" being descends from above, telling him that the Great Spirit "is pleased" for he "has seen and known your motives in your fasting now. He sees it is to do good to your fellow creatures, and you did not think of yourself" (185). After seven days of wrestling matches between the stranger and an increasingly weak young man, he defeats the stranger. According to the directions he was given, he buries this new friend

[73] The original poem, according to Parker, was untitled and "follows a style that is not characteristic of [Schoolcraft's] poetry" (98).
[74] Parker notes that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow used this version of the story as inspiration for part V of *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855).

after “clean[ing] the earth of weeds and roots and mak[ing] the earth very soft” (186). Tending to the grave, the body reemerges in spring, transmuted into a climbing stalk of corn, with which the young man can keep his family and the larger community fed.

Other stories collected in Dale Parker’s collection contain similar tidbits of practical advice, such as “The Three Cranberries,” which describes how to avoid wolves (by climbing a tree). Unlike the stories in Traill and Moodie, however, this is a tale of collectivity, of community. Though Moodie and Traill discussed the communal bees, their Canada was one of individual — or, at most, familial — struggle. This tale also includes the very kind of instructions that Moodie’s and Traill’s texts promise. The young man is told that when his friend’s new body emerges, “his blankets must be taken off, and his feathers pulled away” (187). The corn must be shucked, yes, but in Schoolcraft’s telling, it is a food for *a* people, not for a person.

Though Hutchings describes Schoolcraft as, “as a woman of mixed ancestry she embodied Ojibwe, American, and British forms of identity,” he concludes, “she could not ultimately embrace the changes that improvement wrought upon her native land” (47). That “improvement” included the further settling and incorporation of Indigenous land into what became Canada with a concomitant consolidation of what it meant to be Canadian. Thus, the poet J.C. Yule could write in 1881, “These poems are essentially Canadian. They have nearly all been written on Canadian soil;—their themes and incidents … are almost wholly Canadian; and they are mainly the outgrowth of many and varied experiences in Canadian life” (iii). The “disappearing American” images of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit survived, of course. In an unsigned diary housed in Duke’s Rubenstein Library, a British woman writer ends her journal about her travels through North America on a note of regret: “I have had one disappointment, I

must confess … I wanted to see a real live Indian, such as we read about."[75] "I certainly have seen one or two," she adds, "but they were in a show, [and] too tame for anything" (92). Like Moodie and her contemporaries, this woman expected to see an "Indian," a construction that Saunt summarizes as a people "savage and primitive or noble and in touch with nature. They were stoic, brave, cowardly, untrustworthy, honorable, and doomed" (xii). They were, in other words, incapable of actually existing. They were an overlapping Venn diagram of white supremacist justifications for the settler-colonial project: either too childlike to govern themselves or too dangerous to be left alone.

[75] *Englishwoman's Diary of a visit to United States and Canada*, 1897, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Box 1, D050986791, pg. 92.

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Chapter 3: Dreaming India's Future: The Romance and State Formation

> "How does a culture seeking to become independent of imperialism imagine its own past?"
>
> ― Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*

> "[The historical novel] is neither behind or ahead of its times, but abreast of them."
>
> ― Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction*

Charlotte Brontë begins her novel *Shirley: A Tale* (1849) with a warning directed to the reader: "If you think, from this prelude, that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you never were more mistaken" (5). "Do you anticipate sentiment, and poetry, and reverie? Do you expect passion, and stimulus, and melodrama?" she asks. "Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. Something real, cool, and solid, lies before you; something unromantic as Monday morning, when all who have work wake with the consciousness that they must rise and betake themselves thereto" (5). Brontë, here, seems to be preempting her critics, specifically those who then―and now―dismiss romance as childish or overly *feminine*. It recalls the response Brontë had received from the poet laureate Robert Southey after she sent him drafts of her own writing just a decade before the publication of *Jane Eyre*. Southey dismissed her, writing, "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be."[76] It is an infamous line that Lucy Hartley, in the introduction to the recent *The History of British Women's Writing, rewords, arguing, "*Literature *can* be the business of a woman's life, and it *ought* to be" (emphasis in original, 2). And though Hartley identities women as a catalyst for redefining "the

[76] Southey, Robert. Received by Charlotte Bronte, 12 Mar. 1837. Brontë Parsonage Museum.

hierarchies of high and low, elite and popular, majority and minority" classifications of literature, Brontë seems an active participant in keeping these realms separate.

It is no surprise then, that when describing her travels around India, Lady Cecilia Fielding often turned to romance to register the experiences. In the early months of 1887, with her husband newly approved for six months of leave, Fielding and her husband, Viscount Fielding and later the 9th Earl of Denbigh, left their bungalow in Pune ("Poona" in her notes) and headed to Bombay, the first stop on their grand tour of India. They visited a Tower of Silence, a traditional Parsi burial structure—which Lady Fielding sketches—and met the Maharajahs of Vadodaro and Jaipur before arriving in Delhi sometime in March 1887. Lady Fielding and her husband toured the Taj Mahal, which she describes as "a perfect dream of beauty, one can hardly believe it real," adding that she "fancies oneself living in the Arabian Nights of fairy land."[77] Earlier, on seeing the gold and silver carriages of the Maharajah of Vadodara, she had similarly remarked, "its [sic] just like the Arabian Nights or … fairy land, bar the dust, the smells."[78] But Delhi is also fraught for her, its stone parapets invoking the violence of the Indian Rebellion after thirty years of consolidating British power in India:

> We went over the place in the fort [which] has been much destroyed by the Sepoys in the mutiny who picked out the stones inlaid in the marble. This is the palace where Bahadur Shah held his court when placed on the thrown of the [Mughals] by the mutinous force, [and] whither the women [and] children were carried before they were massacred.[79]

[77] Fielding, Lady Cecilia. *Lady Cecilia Fielding diary, 1885 Dec. 3 – 1886 May 3.* Manuscript. Duke University, Rubenstein Library, pg. 191.
[78] *ibid*, pg. 156.
[79] *ibid*, pg. 215-6.

It is a curious combination, the delight and the danger, a combination that Fielding describes as through *romance* as a fitting way to capture the disparate threads of life as an Anglo-Indian under the Raj.[80]

But, as critics have long argued, an essential element of a romantic imaginary is a fixation with the past, whether a pre-industrial pastoral England or, for the purposes of this chapter, an India forever stoked in revolution against its European conquerors and colonizers. In what follows, I hope to disentangle the political potential of the romance through two very different historical romance novels: Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters* (1897) and Swarnakumari Devi's *The Fatal Garland* (published serially in Bengali in 1892 and in English in 1914). In brief, I argue that Steel and Swarnakumari[81] encode political plans for India into romances as a means of entering a debate to which women were not welcome and, for Swarnakumari, could have invoked the wrath of newly empowered British censors in India as well as a paternalistic and patriarchal Bengali society. The levels of encoding speak to Steel's and Swarnakumari's subject positions, and analysis can further complicate the way in which we treat "gender" as an object of material, political, and cultural analysis.

Steel writes in her preface that she arrived at the title of her novel—an English translation of Genesis 1:2[82]—because "when you ask any uneducated native of India why the Great Rebellion came to pass, he will, in nine cases out of ten, reply, 'God knows! He sent a Breath into the World'" (vi). The turn to the numinous obscures the very real material conditions that prompted such a vast and violent resistance to colonialism. Historians now agree that the

[80] As she writes in her diary, her material conditions also felt *grander*: the Fieldings could afford fourteen servants in Pune, to which she adds, "not bad is it!" (77).
[81] Critics generally refer to her as Swarnakumari, "Devi" being an honorific. In her lifetime, she often signed as "Mrs. Ghosal" or "S. Ghosal." I will use Swarnakumari for clarity.
[82] In the *King James*: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

immediate cause of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 was indeed the circulation of stories of animal fats used in the new Enfield rifles and the resulting threat to caste and status.[83] But this was simply another act of disrespect, another item on a list of grievances stretching back centuries, as the British East India Company warred with and conquered city states and kingdoms across the Indian subcontinent in a vicious cycle of "divide and conquer." The motives of the men and women who took up arms against the EIC were as vast and varied as the subcontinent itself. As theorist Prithwindra Mukherjee helpfully summarizes, some of the rebels "were revolutionary by temperament; others, xenophobic; still others were angry with the English for having put an end to their feudal and conservative monopoly" (59). As Sheshalatha Reddy adds, those rebelling "may also be read as engaging in a violent strike against a trading company with extra-legal powers" (2). The historiography would lack this nuance until reconsiderations in the mid-twentieth century.

In the roughly half-century between the Rebellion in 1857 and the Partition of Bengal in 1905, the various stories of the rebellion, the multiplicity of motivations, the byzantine web of temporary alliances and historical hatreds that animated the rebellion had collapsed into a simpler narrative. In this much less complicated version of the story, Indians had betrayed the white settlers trying to uplift South Asia and, as a result of brutal and unspeakable crimes, the white colonial government had exacted a necessary vengeance. Even the causes of the rebellion were flattened to accommodate this narrative. Financial, legal, and political motivations were whittled away, leaving only the story of the animal fats in the weapons that the British provided to its soldiers. The cartridge story was convenient, conjuring an irrational Indian servant whose

[83] Consuming the animal fats would have rendered the sepoy soldiers casteless and, as Irfan Habib argues, caste remained an extremely important marker of status for sepoy soldiers, particularly since "that kind of status was perhaps the only thing left to them" as they were not eligible for promotions into the officer ranks (19).

religion forced him to care more about the mouth than the soul. For other nineteenth-century writers, even this cause was eventually dismissed. Writer and journalist Joachim Hayward Stocqueler, in a history of India that was nearing completion when the rebellion exploded, admits that while "[g]reased cartridges have lost the Government the confidence of the army," ultimately, "The wolf in the fable wanted but an excuse to destroy the lamb" (215). [84] Even the naming of the conflict as the Sepoy Mutiny helped legitimize the violence of British reprisals: the punishment for mutiny, after all, was death.

For Steel to re-narrate the Rebellion was not an attempt at a more discerning historiography. The story was settled. As historian Snigdha Sen writes, "In general, the British historians considered the event of 1857 as an imperial crisis and not as an Indian attempt to achieve the freedom of their own country" (82). Meanwhile, according to the politician and historian Meghnad Desai, in the decades following the Rebellion, "[o]n the Indian side, there was a strange silence" (106).[85] For example, in a history primer published in 1904, the Bengali writer and historian Romesh Chunder Dutt summarizes the rebellion thusly: "[i]ndications of disaffection were manifest in many places and the great Mutiny of the Sepoys at last broke out in May 1857" (108). Dutt does not name the actors and, combined with his sweeping generalizations, this refuses to grant agency to those who fought in the rebellion. He spends more time discussing the Proclamation of 1858, which Dutt argues, "to be the best security of [Indian's] rights under the British rule" (108).

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[84] Among Stocqueler's more draconian recommendations for a post-rebellion government are demands that the British "abolish *the holidays*" of the Hindus and Sikhs (216). He then quickly connects this religious intolerance to other strains of discrimination in Britain: "We did not hesitate in England for centuries to keep Catholics and Dissenters out of office because of their noncomformity … and to this hour we exclude the peaceful Jew from a seat in Parliament" (216).

[85] Reddy identifies Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's *The Indian War of Independence* (1909) as "one of the earliest accounts of the rebellion to cast it within anti-colonial, nationalist terms" (21).

This silence is partially explained by a series of laws aimed at crushing dissent in India, epitomized by a new class of censors in India whose job was to catalogue all printed material. This system of surveillance, meant to anticipate dissidence rather than merely react to it, included a vast network of "native informants" and a Byzantine system of classification. In the words of the critic Robert Darnton, the British imperial government responded to the Indian Rebellion by creating a new administration that "depended on modern modes of information gathering — that is, on an endless flow of words on paper" (138).[86] In particular, this new mode of preventative governance used a new sedition law, CODE 124A, a law that Tanya Agathocleous argues, "could shape what could be said, how it could be said, and who could say it" (570). Agathocleous shows that the law turned the administrators of the British Raj into paranoid readers and, in the decades near the turn of the century, Indian and Bengali intellectuals were arrested for sedition, including Mukunda Das, a Bengali poet and activist associated with the Swadeshi movement and a contemporary of Swarnakumari's. Two more acts, the Newspapers (Incitement to Offense) Act and the Indian Press Act, were ratified in the wake of the Partition of Bengal in 1905, a move that "shook the whole of India with a spontaneous popular indignation" (Mukherjee 115).

The threats of censors, however, do not fully explain the silence that Baron Desai locates in the historiography. The other, more complicated reason, is that, while the British had a clear narrative to tell about the violence and upheaval, the story of India in the rebellion was, according to Ganda Singh, "a very sad story of 'everyone for himself and no one for the country'" (107). The subcontinent had not revolted uniformly; in fact, Wagner argues that the

[86] As Darnton notes, the punishment for not registering a work with the censors could include two years in jail and a fine of up to 5000 rupees.

Rebellion "had been suppressed only because the Sikhs had remained loyal to the British and turned their weapons against their own countrymen" (xviii). For Desai, then, "The puzzle is not that India was not a single polity, but why anyone should have thought it should be one" (9-10). The shock of the rebellion, according to Sangeeta Ray, "had left the English at home and in India questioning the governing of such a vast and diverse land, a rule that before the rebellion had seemed natural and inevitable" (55). Both writers proffer a united vision of India: for Steel, one cohered by a British administration able to more effectively read the signs of rebellion before they occur; and, for Swarnakumari, a land unified by cultural and historical links that stretched back centuries.

The alleged verisimilitude of Steel's novel was not an option for Swarnakumari. If a writer such as Steel was bound, at least partially, by the separate sphere ideology, for Swarnakumari, these manacles were made manifest by a racialized legal system staffed by Agathocleous's "paranoid readers" who had the power to imprison her. She could not write against the British government without risking sedition charges herself. A vivid narration of the Indian Rebellion told from the Indian perspective, even a high-caste Indian, would have been irrevocably seditious to the paranoid reader-officials. Moreover, an explicit attack against the imperial state would also conflict with her brother's more idealistic politics. For Rabindranath Tagore, argues historian Prithwindra Mukherjee, "patriotism insisted more on constructing than destroying" particularly as Tagore, along with other intellectuals saw another violent revolution to be "suicidal" (98, 94). Instead, I argue, Swarnakumari responded to the tightening British censorship by returning to a genre that the British—and British-educated Indian elite—actively denounced: the romance.

Though one could say — without much exaggeration — that the history of the romance *is* the history of Western literature, trying to define the genre generally results in frustration. Romances rely on archetypes, except when they do not. Romances are epic, except when they are not. Romances are not novels, except when they are. The genre is so slippery that in the opening to a recent Blackwell *Companion to Romance*, critic Corinne Saunders argues that, "Romance is a genre of extraordinary fluidity: it spans mimetic and nonmimetic, actuality and fantasy, history and legend, past and present, and is striking in its open-endedness, if frustrating in its capacity to defy classification" (2). If romance's aesthetic flavor could be generally characterized as idealization, its critical affect is one of exasperation. Romance often seems more useful in deconstructing the very idea of genre stability or in propagating more permeable definitions that allow for romance's peculiarities.

Rather than try to imagine genres as prescriptive, it helps to imagine genre classifications as historically situated conversations between, on the one hand, the seeming "natural" classifications of past works and, on the other, competing presentist demands to taxonomize works "by literary form, by subject-matter, and by intended readership," according to Raymond Williams (182). Contemporary definitions of romance — when attempted at all — tend to be routed through two figures: Northrop Frye and Fredric Jameson. For Frye, the "essential difference" between the romance genre and the more general novel "lies in the conception of characterization. The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes" (304). This blurring between what Catherine Gallagher calls "fictionality" in novels — the *believability* of characters that marked a shift in novel writing in the eighteenth century — and the "stylized figures" creates a "subjective intensity" in the romance according to Frye and "a suggestion of allegory [that] is constantly

creeping around its fringes" (304). Ever the historicist, Jameson, in his reading of Frye, turns away from psychological differences and, instead, focuses on what we would now call *affordances*, to use Caroline Levine's language. "Romance," he argues, "now again seems to offer the possibility of sensing other historical rhythms, and of demonic or Utopian transformations of a real now unshakably set in place" (104). The difficulty is that Frye and Jameson tend to define the romance *against* the novel even as both critics acknowledge the novel's indebtedness to the romance for its narrative structure if not its later attempts at mimesis.

And though Swarnakumari writes of her father "giving [her] an education unusual for Hindu girls of those days" (11-12), which included education in English literature, there is another, autochthonous tradition. As Pasha Khan argues in his recent book, *The Broken Spell: Indian Storytelling and the Romance Genre in Persian and Urdu*, two related genres in Urdu and Persian — the d*āstān* or the *qiṣṣah* — were losing their literary importance after the colonization of India.[87] As British governments imported their literary discourse as part of a universalizing but Western system of discourse, "The importance of the *qiṣṣah* genre faded, like many other things, with the coming of Western modernity and the influx of colonial ideas into the minds of Indian elites" (2).[88] Undoubtedly influenced by Thomas Macaulay's argument in favor of a Western education for Indian Civil Servants, toward the end of the nineteenth century, "the Urdu literati were already calling for their fellow Indians to move beyond the romance, as if it were an absurd and childish relic of the past" (Khan 2). As Khan suggests, then, romance, both in India and the West, comes to be seen as "something to be outgrown, a juvenile and undeveloped form"

[87] Khan chose to translate both terms as "romance," though he notes that such translations "must be scrutinized, for it is symptomatic of a view of the *qiṣṣah* that has more to do with epistemological developments in eighteenth-century Western Europe than with the qissah's own merits or demerits" (1).
[88] Mīr Bāqir 'Alī Dāstāngo, the so-called "last storyteller of Delhi," died in 1928, "severing … one of [Delhites'] last links" to the culture of the Mughals (Khan 54).

(Frye 306). It is difficult to know to what extent Swarnakumari read these older forms, but she was of a generation of writers who, according to Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, "tactically redeployed dominant held onto older strains and recharged them with new meanings and even introduced new issues, new emphases, new orientations" (154). For a writer looking to avoid a bureaucratic machine of "paranoid readers," the romance genre could provide a mask for political arguments.

For my argument, I turn to John Frow, who argues that "genres create effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility …. These effects, are not, however, fixed and stable, since texts … do not 'belong' to genres but are, rather, uses of them" (2). Both Swarnakumari and Steel's novels *perform* romance for complicated reasons. For Steel, the romance allows her to indulge in the kind of myth-making necessary for her broader argument about the future of India while, for Swarnakumari, the romance hides her political intent behind the "jalousies" of her figurative language in ways that eluded censors in the early twentieth century and continue to elude critics today. I pair these texts as a means of investigating the political purchase of romance and its ability to imagine political futures, not to rehash debates about core and periphery—and given Swarnakumari's high-caste status and her family's long involvement with and profit from the East India Company and the Raj, such dichotomies obscure a more nuanced picture of the artist as an inheritor of a conflicted tradition.

PART I: *ON THE FACE OF THE WATER*

Unlike some of her contemporaries, Steel avows that her romance is "attempting to be at once a story and a history," though "probably fail[ing] in either aim" (v). The text contains scattered annotations: footnotes about interviews or court records and telegrams, but, overall,

Steel seems content to reproduce rumor as fact. When the rebellion does erupt in the novel, the narrator confesses that "[t]he worst horrors of that night, we are told, can never be known" (181). It's a useful rhetorical move that substantiates Steel's role as the aggregator of stories while also asking readers to indulge in the grisly imagining themselves. The novel is vast, and I cannot analyze the many subplots.[89] I will instead focus on those moments when Steel's political message is clearest. As for the rather spectacular plot, Steel asserts in the introduction that, "An Englishwoman was concealed in Delhi, in the house of an Afghan, and succeeded in escaping to the Ridge just before the siege. I have imagined another; that is all" (vi). Such a miraculous escape might have occurred — and, certainly, Steel would have been in a position to hear such tales — but it is Steel's language and characterizations that conjure romance. It is the way she presents valiant British soldiers struggling against an animalistic mob of Indian rebels; or how characters that act dishonorably, such as the mistress of the protagonist's husband, achieve a kind of nobility in death. For Steel, romance is a means of juxtaposing the right and wrong kinds of administration and the right and wrong kinds of men to lead such a government. It amounts to an argument for a more culturally enlightened British administration of India, though one that, in its knowledge, acts swiftly and lethally against any potential uprisings. These moments of romantic exaggeration suggest that low-caste Indians are ruthless and wicked and high-caste Indians are incapable of controlling the unruly mobs they purport to rule. The novel, then, like other mutiny tales, uses the alleged violence against women to justify a strong, centralized British government in the subcontinent.

[89] As a reviewer wrote for *The Bookman*, "A reader is sometimes overwhelmed, dazed, and baffled by the demands on his attention" (124).

Steel, then, paradoxically turns to a historical romance to narrate the rebellion even as she claims that, for the Indian population, the event was caused by ahistorical forces, the Breath of God, to whom one can pose no questions, only respond. Steel formally encodes her sympathies, inhabiting the *memsahib* Kate Erlton in narration that teeters on the edge of free indirect discourse, describing Kate as she passes a group of Indian men in a carriage:

> What were they thinking of, those dark incomprehensible faces closing closer and closer round her? What could they be thinking of? Uncivilised, heathen, as they were—tied to hateful horrible beliefs and customs—unmentionable thoughts! So the innate repulsion of the alien overpowered her dim desire to be kind. (9)

Though Steel prefaces her novel with the assertion that her story is a "photograph—that is, a picture in which the differentiation caused by colour is left out," she repeatedly describes Indians in this way: as animalistic, as threatening mobs waiting for the chance to wreak havoc upon their British colonizers. It is not, I would argue, merely foreshadowing the eventual mutiny; Steel is arguing—like J.S. Mill and others—that the Indians are yet too childish to govern themselves. The characterization is entirely in line with her earlier writing epitomized by her now infamous adage from *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1888), in which she argues "the Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to say, kindly, but with the greatest firmness" (12). Steel herself connects the running of a household to that of an imperial administration, cautioning "We do not wish to advocate an unholy haughtiness; but an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire" (18). For Steel, this meant dragging the Indian people, a people for whom "Time is Naught," into an imperial present (*OTFOTW* 2).

She characterizes the genre as "at once a story and a history," though admits she is likely to "fail[ ] in either aim" (v). It is merely the first of Steel's moves to buttress her own credibility. Positioning the novel in such a way, I argue, inoculates Steel against charges that she is distorting the history while giving credibility to her romance. Steel's version of events is less true or accurate than the government reports that Steel likely reviewed but more accurate than some of the more hyperbolic novels that followed the rebellion, such as the arch-imperialist G.A. Henty's *In the Days of the Mutiny* (1895) or Philip Meadow Taylor's *Seeta* (1872). The text contains scattered annotations: footnotes about interviews or court records and telegrams and an assertion that "every incident bearing in the remotest degree on the Indian Mutiny … is scrupulously exact," but, overall, Steel seems content to reproduce rumor as fact (v). When the rebellion does erupt in the novel, the narrator confesses that "[t]he worst horrors of that night, we are told, can never be known" (181). It's a useful rhetorical move that substantiates Steel's role as the aggregator of stories while also asking readers to indulge in the grisly imagining themselves.

Nevertheless, the novel is not imperial propaganda. Steel assesses the pre-Rebellion government as greedy, inflexible and unresponsive to the demands of the people they are purported to govern. Early in the novel, the narrator acknowledges the failings of the East India Company administration, before adding, "But Lucknow had a keener grievance than these in the new tax on opium, the drug which helps men to bear hunger and bankruptcy" (4). The suggestion is that the EIC administration had forced those living under its rule into struggling merely for survival. Or, as Mike Davis writes, "If the history of British rule in India were to be condensed into a single fact, it is this: there was no increase in India's per capita income from 1757 to 1947" (329).

Critics have framed the novel in terms of how it "emphasizes the multiplicity of colonial voices" through its wide cast of characters (Paxton 22). Sara Suleri reads the novel in terms of "the separation of parent and child," which in *OTFoTW* "represents colonial maternity's attempts to maintain a solemn sadness at the absence of its child, but the narrative bereavement it exudes indicates a more severe psychic damage" (80-1). My concern is how the novel imagines a proper British government in India through the two contrasting white British officers. Maj. Erlton, rash and culturally ignorant, comes to represent the more brutal tactics of the East India Company, while Jim Douglas, aka Greyman, the disgraced polyglot spy who hides Kate and an Anglo-Indian boy during the height of the violence, represents a more culturally aware and sophisticated ruling apparatus. As the novel shows, however, Douglas' cultural knowledge and experience make him a more ruthless and more effective British administrator. *On the Face of the Waters* proposes an administration of better, paranoid readers in order to more successfully deny the possibility of Indian independence.

Douglas appears in the novel as a mystery, initially calling himself "Greyman," with "beautiful eyes … cold grey blue with the northern glint of steel" (14). His name and his mannerisms early in the novel suggest a certain moral ambiguity, a coldness. He meets Mrs. Erlton when he comes to collect a debt from her husband. She pleads for mercy and time, but he does not budge. "I don't believe in mercy, Mrs. Erlton. I never did. Justice doesn't need it" (17). Major Erlton says that Douglas is "so mixed up with native intrigue as to have any amount of false evidence at his command" (22). That "intrigue" is, in part, a reference to Douglas's relationship with a native Muslim woman, Zora, whom he "bought … from a house of ill-fame, as he would have bought a horse, or a flower-pot, or anything else which he thought would make

life pleasanter to him" and then installs into a beautiful zenana (25).[90] Of course, the novel then makes clear that Zora was "just about to enter a profession to which she was evidently a recruit kidnapped in early infancy" (26). In other words, she is a trained sex worker who had yet to actually work. At the beginning of the novel, as Ray articulates, "[t]he affair … is literally breathing its last—the 'native' Zora is dying" (78). She is dying, "as so many secluded women do, of a slow decline" (26). We might call this a disease plot: Zora had to die to make space in the story for the affair between Douglas and Alice Erlton.

Ray has demonstrated the ways in which Zora's depiction and, in particular, the use of animalistic imagery "repeats the invariable binary opposition of East/West as feminine/masculine" (79). Yet what interests me is the role that Zora seems to play in making Douglas a more effective reader of India. Part of the novel's argument is that the rebellion was able to occur because of the gulf in understanding between men like Maj. Erlton and those with the cultural and political knowledge to understand India and Indians. A minor character, "the political" who had "nice taste in Persian couplets" tells one of the generals "you soldiers have not to learn the language" (38). Those in charge of India are incapable of reading it, despite, that, as one character declares, "the whole of India is one vast sign-post" (39). Or, as the narrator adds in an aside, "the broad fact underlying all our Indian administration [is] that we are strangers and exiles" (126). Douglas, however, is neither of these. He has fathered a child with Zora, though the child dies a stillbirth. He never tells Zora that the death was a "relief it was to him," nor did he tell her "of the vague repulsion which the thought of a child had always brought with it" (35). His penetration of Zora, the novel implies, allows Douglas to read India. It is Douglas who

[90] Sukanya Banerjee notes that "the zenana was a site of much interest in popular metropolitan and missionary narratives" (120).

recognizes, for instance, that the rebellion must have a signal to begin, which he imagines would be "Something soul-stirring, no doubt; for Humanity had a theory that an angel must trouble the waters and so give it a righteous cause for stepping in to heal the evil" (162).

Douglas has the necessary knowledge. We learn, for example, that he had saved his servant Tara "from her husband's funeral pyre" (27). Tara laments that she was unable to die as intended and is, therefore, trapped in a liminal state, with no place in Indian society and only the bonds of servitude connecting her to Douglas and Zora. Douglas uses his knowledge of Tara's liminal position to blackmail and control her. Like Kipling's Kim, Douglas also has a talent for disguise. As he investigates the warning signs of the rebellion, he transforms, an oft-used trope in romance texts: "So, with a smear of ashes from one pocket, a dab of turmeric and vermilion from another … he emerged into the street disguised as a mendicant" (101). Douglas understands it is the surface that matters. Only he has the power to penetrate beneath them. Even when the military men have knowledge, they rely too heavily on surface understandings. When they discuss one of the leaders of the rebellion, for example, one of the military officers reads from a report that the man is "*fanatic, tall, medium colour, mole on inside of left shoulder*" (44, emphasis in original). Douglas responds, "I was not aware of the mole, sir," adding "but he is a magnificent preacher, a consistent patriot, a born organizer; and he is now on his way to Delhi" (44). The military officers can catalogue and taxonomize based on outward appearance, but only Douglas understands motive and intent. In a sense, Douglas is the perfect paranoid reader. And the novel endorses Douglas, as romances do, with marriage.

Douglas is more suited to India because, as the novel argues, "natives dearly love" being ordered about and "the more autocratic a master is, the better pleased they are to gain dignity by serving him" (31). It is the lack of a clear leader for both the Hindu and Muslim population that

leads a character, before the rebellion begins, to remark, "I don't anticipate trouble …. It would be hard for even a good leader to hit on a general grievance which would touch both the army and the civil population" (125).

Major Erlton, meanwhile, comes to represent a more militaristic system of control, albeit one that only reacts, one that blunders into action without a plan. A writer in *The Saturday Review* commends Steel for this depiction of Maj. Erlton, writing, "The thick-shouldered, thick-witted, well-born and vilely bred hero-blackguard of our imperial race has never been better drawn."[91] The novel also operates within a clear moral system, in which crimes are paid in kind. Alice Gissing and Maj. Erlton, who are conducting a rather public affair, are riding together in a dogcart when they strike two Indian children. Gissing tells a bystander "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" (53). When she tells the story to another Anglo-Indian, she has become even more callous. "By the way, I forgot to tell you—the Fair was so funny—but Erlton ran over a black baby. It wasn't his fault a bit, and the mother, luckily, didn't seem to mind; because it was a girl, I expect. Aren't they an odd people? One really never knows what will make them cry or laugh" (59).

She later dies in a figuratively fraught scene that similarly relies on melodrama. She dies saving Sonny Seymour, an Anglo-Indian child who floats from one mother figure to another. An Indian man pierces her pregnant belly with a lance, a metonym for the violent violations of Anglo-Indian women. Alice Gissing's death also ensures Sonny's survival at the cost of her life, as well as that of her child who, as Alice dies, she announces is a boy. It is a bloody,

[91] "On the Face of the Waters." *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, vol. 82, no. 2144, 1896, pg. 569. *ProQuest.*

melodramatic tableau that seems to defy easy explanation. A contemporary review calls her death "a bit of pure heroism."[92] Had the child been a girl, we might read this as emblematic of the British view of the rebellion: women die at the hands of violent rebels, but white Anglo-Indian men will avenge them. Instead, we must read the child's death as the impossibility of a future for Erlton. It was, after all, his child. His method of control, of parenting — to use both the novel's familial framing and the kind of language that British pundits used to describe the British Raj — is no longer adequate. Gissing then becomes a site of memorial, a monument to the crimes of the rebellion. Another Anglo-Indian officer, the boyish Manwaring, who had been infatuated with Alice, fights through hordes of rebels to finally stumble, bleeding and dying, into the home where he will sit a lifeless vigil. She, too, represents a past vision of Anglo-Indians

Mrs. Erlton, then, represents the ideal imperial subject. She works to transform India into a small slice of England. In her garden, she plants "poor clumps of English annuals … which, in those late March days, turned the garden into a wilderness of strange perfumed beauty …. if a visitor remarked that anything in her environment was reminiscent of the old country, she rejoiced to have given another exile what was to her as the shadow of a rock in a thirsty land" (21). Yet, the novel discourages Indian insularity. The schemes of the aging Bahadur Shah result, partly, from the isolation of "the palace-fort," which was "shut in from all outside influence … like some tepid, teeming breeding-place for strange forms of life unknown to purer, clearer atmospheres" (76). The Shah himself is described as having "sparse hair … high hollow checks … waxy skin" (85).

[92] "On the Face of the Waters." *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, vol. 82, no. 2144, 1896, pg. 569. *ProQuest.*

Douglas reminds another military officer that, "it was put on official record two months ago that an organized scheme for resistance existed in every regiment between Calcutta and Peshawur" (155-6). He adds, "we deserve to suffer, we do indeed" (156). Of course, for Douglas the failure is equal parts mistreatment and a lack of awareness of the effects of that mistreatment. Though he asks, rhetorically, "Is there no medium between bribing children with lollipops and torturing them—keeping them on the strain, under fire as it were, for hours watching their best friends punished unjustly?" (156). He represents a view of writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who began to reassess the Rebellion. The writer Richard Congreve, in his *India* pamphlet from 1907, argues to "Let justice be done on the Sepoy, but let it be done also on the European, whether civil or military, who shall have committed excesses" (11). The novel is able to elevate Douglas, then, because he was already an outcast from the East India Company when the rebellion began. He had no clear ties to those excesses that Congreve noted.

The novel was received warmly. One reviewer declares, "No one has taken such trouble before, save historians, and they have left the imagination out."[93] Another writes that Steel's novel is "at once the most ambitious and the best study of that terrible episode which exists in our fiction, and it is at least improbably that coming generations of writers will give us anything better."[94] The criticisms are, unsurprisingly, questions of genre. The reviewer in *The Athenaeum* ends an otherwise laudable piece by saying, "we regret to find that the author is unable to shake herself free from the objectionable habit prevalent among so many lady writers of dragging in the sexual question freely. The blemish renders the work unsuitable for young people."[95]

[93] "On the Face of the Waters." *The Bookman*, vol. 11, no. 64, 1897, pg. 124. *ProQuest.*
[94] "On the Face of the Waters." *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, vol. 82, no. 2144, 1896, pp. 569. *ProQuest.*
[95] "On the Face of the Waters." *The Athenaeum*, no. 3606, 1896, pp. 792. *ProQuest*.

PART II: THE FATAL GARLAND

Between when Swarnakumari first wrote *The Fatal Garland* and when she translated it into English, the British government had further destabilized the subcontinent. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, had led an administrative reorganization that split India from Assam and Eastern Bengal, as would happen *again* in 1947 and 1971. The historian Iftekhar Iqbal argues that the British enacted the partition to create a province with more direct connections to China and Thailand, increase the production and export of tea, and to favor Bengali nationalism as a means of thwarting a growing Indian nationalism. East Bengal and Assam importantly straddled the border between the formal and the informal empire, between direct administrative control and the more opaque "spheres of influence" that Britain and other Western powers practiced in China and Japan. The decision backfired. Instead of dampening nationalist spirit, the partition "shook the whole of India with a spontaneous popular indignation" (Mukherjee 115). The plan was annulled six years later in what Iqbal calls "the first major political victory for the nationalists who had perceived the province as a communally motivated divide-and-rule ploy of the empire" (69). The nationalists became more strident, and British repression intensified. Contemporaries of Swarnakumari were arrested for speaking against British rule. In 1909, the Bengali poet, composer, and Swadeshi advocate Mukunda Das was arrested and imprisoned on charges of sedition. Another writer and activist, Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), the Aberdeen-educated doctor, "dipped his pen in vitriol, before attacking the abject politics of British in India" (116). He, too, was tried but acquitted.

Swarnakumari responded to this censorship and to the general silence in the historiography by adapting a romance in order to argue for a unified vision of India. As Sangeeta Ray writes, "the novel often became the site for the expression of the political and social

ambitions of the upper caste and middle class as they sought to imagine a culturally powerful Indian nation grounded in a common tradition" (13). It is to that common tradition that *The Fatal Garland* appeals by invoking a moment in history in which Muslim and Hindu rulers were united by marriage to rule a multicultural India. In other words, Swarnakumari "deconstruct[s] a given or accepted historiography by introducing other genealogies that have hitherto been excluded from investigation" (Ray 14). And though Ray is speaking about postcolonial writers, Swarnakumari's efforts in *The Fatal Garland* fit neatly with this construction or, rather, deconstruction of historical narratives.

Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932), who published as Mrs. Ghosal, was the younger sister of Rabindranath Tagore, the preeminent Bengali writer and intellectual. As part of the larger Brahmin Tagore family, Swarnakumari grew up in the "many-mansioned Kalkotta home of a landed family," with estates stretching across Odisha – then the British imperial state of Orissa – and Eastern Bengal and Assam.[96] Her grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, consolidated the family's wealth through investments in mining and real estate: "Men such as Dwarkanath Tagore and Rommohan Roy"—perhaps the most important figure in the early Bengali Renaissance—"did not see themselves as local princes or sovereigns, but instead as owners of property that was possessed purely for financial gain" (173).[97] This financial security allowed future generations of the Tagore family to immerse themselves in cultural production centered around their grand home in Kolkata, then the capital of British East India.[98] Figures such as

[96] Ghosh, Sankha. "Introduction: The Poet's Life." *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Poems*, translated by Sukanta Chaudhuri. Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 1–42.
[97] Wilson, Jon. E. *The Domination of Strangers: Modern Governance in Eastern India, 1780-1835*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
[98] While pre- and post-colonial Indian governance has been centered in Delhi, Prithwindra Mukherjee describes nineteenth-century Kolkata as "the theatre of ideological confrontations and of administrative, political and commercial managements" that gave rise to "a new indigenous elite" (58).

Rommohun Roy (1772-1833) and Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846) — Swarnakumari's grandfather — immersed themselves in Western literature and learning.[99] Roy even traveled to England to testify before a Parliamentary Committee and conducted a written debate with Christian theologians in the 1820s. In her first English-language novel, *An Unfinished Song* (1913), Swarnakumari asserts her own Western learning, as two characters argue whether the novelist George Eliot should be considered equal to Shakespeare, which Freedman notes demonstrates Swarnakumari's credibility to Western audiences.

Swarnakumari was herself an activist, a scientist, a playwright. *An Unfinished Song* had received favorable press across the Anglo-world, from *The New York Herald* to the *Aberdeen Free Press*, which wrote, "If [Rabindranath Tagore's] merits are great, those of his sister are scarcely less, and both East and West will agree it is a charming revelation of the workings of a woman's heart."[100] Teresa Hubel, in an article about Swarnakumari's scientific contributions, reads that review as showing that Swarnakumari "is not quite white, not quite male, and not quite Rabindranath Tagore" (168). Still, by the time she translated *The Fatal Garland* into English in 19XX, she had been the editor of the literary magazine, *Bharati*, off and on for thirty years—an editorship she inherited when her brother retired from the position after only eight years. Through her role as an editor, Rajul Sogani and Indira Gupta, in the introduction to a new edition of *The Uprooted Vine*, argue that Swarnakumari "shaped the literary and cultural tastes of an entire generation of men and women" (viii). Her novels were popular, and she was, in the words of Tharu and Lalita, "one of the most distinguished literary figures of the time, and a torchbearer

[99] The editors of *Women Writing in India* go so far as to argue "history of modern Bengali literature and culture is inextricably intertwined with the history of the Tagore family of Jorasanko, which was to Bengali society what the Medici family was to Europe during the Renaissance" (235). Ignoring the necessity of a European comparison, it would be more accurate to say the Tagore family were both the Medici and the artists they supported.

[100] Quoted in *The Fatal Garland*.

in the tradition of women's writing in Bengal" (235). "It is difficult now to imagine the courage then required for a young and inexperienced woman to undertake such an arduous task," she wrote in the preface to *Garland*, adding "the literary talent of our Bengali women was that time almost latent; and if, by any chance, any one among them showed any ability, the public was astonished" (11).

Indeed, one of the few English-language reviews of *The Fatal Garland*, from the *Manchester Courier*, called Devi's new novel—and her career—"signs of a new era in the mental development of the women of India."[101] Thus, while Swarnakumari's literary output and education are rightly seen as groundbreaking, her repeated relegation to a muted metonym of her race and her gender echoes Mary Poovey's explanation of gendered ideology as something that "*enables* ideas and actions" while simultaneously "*delimit[ing]* responses, not just in the sense of establishing boundaries but in terms of defining territories" (xiv). Even in Friedman's article about the trope of Shakespeare's sister, Swarnakumari seems more important for what she represents rather than what she actually wrote. The novel is a romance, but one full of critiques of religious and ethnic in-fighting among the peoples subjugated by the British in south Asia, yet its response is limited by the view of romance as apolitical genre.

The Fatal Garland concerns a period of warring dynasties in east India in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, before the founding of the Mughal Empire in northern India. The novel is strategically inaccurate, collapsing historical persons into single characters and narrowing its historical scope in order to present a clearer message about the importance of unity at the tale's conclusion. Briefly, the text tells of a Delhi Sultan whose son, Gaias Uddin, rebels against him

[101] "New Novels." *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*. 3 Sept. 1915; pg. 5; Issue 18355. *British Library Newspapers, Part III: 1741-1950.*

with the help of the Raja of Dinajpur, Ganesha Dev. Gaias Uddin becomes sultan but is himself eventually overthrown by Ganesha. In Swarnakumari's telling, the source of the conflict is a beautiful, upper-caste woman named Shaktimai. Scorned by Ganesha Dev, a childhood friend, and hoping to enact revenge on him, Shakti marries the sultan's son in defiance of the sultan, who wants to marry Shakti himself. The son defeats his father and succeeds to the throne, after which he murders his seven brothers and plans to kill his nephew, the final remaining legitimate heir of the sultan. When Ganesha Dev refuses to give up the prince, the new sultan demands his imprisonment. Shakti, moved by Ganesh Dev's nobility and overcoming her own jealousies, sacrifices herself by taking his place in the dungeon cell. The sultan's guards brutally murder Shakti in the dark, thinking her to be Ganesh, and bring her head to the sultan: "The light of the lantern fell on the bleeding face. Divine happiness shone from the features. But of that the Sultan saw nothing. He shouted like a mad man: 'Devil, what have you done? Whose head is this?' And then he fell raving to the ground" (219).

Such violence in the novel is rare, however. Mostly, the text is replete with typical romantic language: sensuous and languorous, full of hyperbolic exclamations of love and intimacy, with characters who as easily rehearse classic Bengali poetry as legends from the Vedas. "And fair indeed she was with the glow of twilight upon her!" the text exclaims about the protagonist, the beautiful Shakti. "Hers was not the golden colour, the tint of the champak flower seen so often in the beautiful women of Bengal, but a complexion radiant, fresh and rosy, like that of a Persian beauty" (46). The evocation of Persia and Persian standards is both a reference to the shared cultural histories of Urdu and Persian, as well as, according to Pasha Khan, the romance's debt to the earlier Persian forms popular in the Mughal courts.

But the text also announces its own limitations and, in doing so, begins undermining the very boundaries set by the romance genre. Such intentions are made apparent in the first chapter, when Swarnakumari describes "a small boat, tied by a rope to a tree … having at heart a futile to desire to float away, but bound by relentless fate – like a woman who must be content to peep at the world through jalousies, to move to and fro with a small, confined area" (23). Devi refers to the position of women in Bengali society and, more specifically, to her own position. Despite her involvement with the Indian National Congress and her work as the editor of *Bharati*, Swarnakumari spent much of her life in seclusion, particularly after the death of her husband. In such moments, Swarnakumari comes to embody Priya Joshi's argument that the Indian novel "successfully subverted earlier colonial policies and radically reversed the priorities of Englishness and empire within the once foreign form of the novel" (8). But whereas Joshi's arguments concern the novel *in toto*, I am arguing for the importance of the romance genre, specifically. Swarnakumari was limited and, in some ways, confined, but the novel also fools us with this imagined insularity. As readers, we are tempted to mistake the smallness of her physical world for a smallness of worldview. She might have to peer "through jalousies," but this did not prevent her from seeing into India's past and, in so doing, making an argument for the shape of India's future.

She skillfully presents herself as both an anomaly and perfectly ordinary: a singular voice defying social expectations but also a woman reliant on her husband for emotional support. "It was he who moulded and shaped me in the fashion that the outside world knows to-day, and under his loving guidance I passed through the stormy waves of literary life as easily and pleasantly as a good swimmer through a rough sea" (12). As Sanjukta Dasgupta argues, though Swarnakumari "belonged to one of the most affluent families in Bengal … she had to persist in

her struggle to find recognition as a writer" (176). Beyond the struggles in her immediate family, including a more famous brother who intervened at least once to try to stop the publication of her first novel, there were also the countless, nameless Anglo-Indian censors.

Devi seems aware of the potential reception of her novel and sardonically subverts her status as a native informant. In one chapter, the narrator says, "Our India is the land of legends. Each tree has its own tale" and, again, later: "Has not every brook, every tree, nay, almost every stone a legend to its credit in this mythic land of dreams of poetry?" (pg, 145). Likewise, the romantic tenor of the text – its sincerity -- is occasionally punctured by Swarnakumari's self-conscious swipes at Orientalist rhetoric. The narrator reminisces, "The asoka tree cannot bring forth its blossoms unless touched by a maiden's foot. But alas! In this unromantic age, the poor asoka tree has to age produce its flowers unaided" (103). While this might seem rueful, longing for a more heroic age, it also asks readers to think of the heroic and the romantic in more quotidian ways. In such lines, we see Swarnakumari working through the artistic battles of the nineteenth century that Khan identifies. Is her text a "new" novel, a romance, a history? This question is relevant not only for Swarnakumari, but more broadly for the genre of the novel as it was developing in India. As Joshi argues, "[p]art of the difficulty with the emergence of an Indian novel lay in finding appropriate fictional *form* to suit Indian needs, and another part lay in finding fiction-worthy material or content" (146, emphasis in original). Instead, I argue that the historical romance afforded a model for Swarnakumari to emphasize the important of pan-Indian solidarity while also avoiding explicit political statements. She writes in the opening, for example, that "it is not for the novelist, teller of a simple tale, to discuss the wisdom" of those who would side with a rebellion against the established authority (20).

Nevertheless, the political context is clear from the novel's opening line: "About the middle of the fourteenth century A.D. Shams-ud-Din Elias Shah, the Mohammedan Governor of Bengal, proclaimed himself to be independent. The Emperor of Delhi marched against the rebel, and war ensued" (19). The novel was published within a single generation of the 1857 Rebellion and self-translated into English as nationalists coordinated bombing campaigns across India. As I said before, the novel is not explicitly anti-imperialist. *The Fatal Garland* does not question the existence of hierarchies or empire, but merely asks that those ruling behave according to a strict set of morals, that they act justly, and that they have a legitimate claim to power. What the text emphasizes more, however, is the need for unity among the various religious groups in India. At the end of the novel, Ganesh Dev, the new Hindu sultan of Delhi, is succeeded by his son, Jadav Dev, who marries the Muslim daughter of Gaias Uddin. Jadav Dev's mother is distressed by the marriage, but a *sannyasin* assures her — in what is a theme throughout the novel — that religious affiliations matter less than how one acts. "Do not despise the child," the holy man tells the parents, "but remember that her mother gave her life to save you all" (221). Her gruesome sacrifice unites the warring families into a single dynasty. The last line in the text confirms a glorious future for Jadav Dev: "He is known in history as Jelal-ud-din [sic], Sultan of Bengal" (221). It is an ending fit for a legend — except that the marriage did not dismantle family rivalries. Jalal-ud-din's son, Shams-ud-din Ahmed Shah "met his end abruptly at the hands of one of his courtiers" in 1436, when the descendants of Gaias Uddin and the Ilyas Shahi dynasty reclaimed power (Sengupta 61). Swarnakumari's strategic erasure of the dynasty's impending destruction bolsters the message of reconciliation. When religious and ethnic differences are set aside, the novel suggests, India can be reborn, unified. This is, of course, where the novel stops.

It does not suggest against whom India might unify. Even as an encoded political message, there seem to be limits.

The Sultan ultimately falls because he fails to reconcile with at least one of his enemies. Instead, the combined pressures of his son, Gaias Uddin and the Raja of Dinajpur, Ganesh Dev, overwhelm his forces. In a different tale, the Sultan's fate would be tragic, a fall predicated on his arrogance and his hubris. But in Swarnakumari's telling, the Sultan knew he was being unwise and unjust, "but he did not change his course" (141-2). If, ultimately, Steel's novel recognizes the role of women *during* the Rebellion as a means to argue for more political participation of women, then we might interpret Swarnakumari's novel as warning against ignoring the political ambitions of women. Both argue that women have always been historical actors with agency and agendas of their own. Where they differ, unsurprisingly, is the status of Indian women.

Early reviewers were less aware, or less keen to admit, the political and historical relevance to Devi's novel. An unsigned review published in the *Manchester Courier* called the novel "an interesting picture of the rapid rise and fall of dynasties" in early modern India.[102] Likewise, the reviewer in *The Athenaeum* writes, "In this Bengalese tale of the fifteenth century love turns to vindictiveness, and vindictiveness back again to love, but it is always a fundamental driving power, something that is as much a part of life as light is a part of day."[103] Her other novels, in particular, *An Unfinished Song*, struck reviewers as more socially relevant, with a reviewer in *The Academy* noting that "Mrs. Ghosal has given us a breezy type of novel showing the life and ideas of Indian ladies of the present time—a time which may be described as an age

[102] "New Novels." *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*. 3 Sept. 1915; pg. 5; Issue 18355. *British Library Newspapers, Part III: 1741-1950.*
[103] "The Fatal Garland." *The Athenaeum*, no. 4584, 1915, pp. 158*. ProQuest.*

of emancipation."[104] How do you enter a debate when the doors have been closed to you? Steel and Swarnakumari answer this question by mobilizing the seeming apolitical nature of the romance genre.

[104] "An Unfinished Song." *The Academy, 1914*, no. 2184, 1914, pp. 336. *ProQuest*.

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Chapter 4: The Lives of Trooper Peter: Indigenous Dislocation in Colonial Conversion Narratives

Though Olive Schreiner's current status in the canon of Victorian literature and, perhaps more importantly, on syllabi across the Anglophone world, rests on a novel, it was not her preferred genre. Reading *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), one feels Schreiner pushing against the demands of mimetic realism typical of late Victorian novels, slipping into parable and allegory to fully capture her vision of colonial South Africa. In a recent biography, Lyndall Gordon notes that *African Farm*'s "moral vision had the appeal of scripture" (n.p.) — unsurprising given Schreiner was the daughter of a German missionary and frequently turned to the Bible for thematic and generic inspiration. Schreiner's wildly successful allegorical collection *Dreams*, now rarely read, was almost as popular as *African Farm* and became one of the foundational texts for the burgeoning women's movement across the Anglophone world. Indeed, Schreiner professed her preference for allegory to the editor Ernest Rhys, writing, "Sometimes I find by throwing a thing into the form of an allegory I can condense four or six pages into one, with no loss but a great gain to clearness."[105] In this chapter, however, I argue for a different interpretation or, at least, a different heuristic through which to read Schreiner's novella, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, a scathing indictment, clad in religious imagery, of Cecil Rhodes and the Chartered Company. Instead of reading this text as an allegory, I argue for reading it primarily as a conversion narrative.

As Patrick Brantlinger has summarized of the late nineteenth century, "The business of the Empire seemed to be everyone's business," and the various churches of England were no

[105] *"Olive Schreiner to Ernest Rhys,"* February 1888, British Library Manuscripts*, Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription, xvi-xviii.*

exception (3). Religious fervor in England might have been uneven in the nineteenth century, but the missionary project remained constant, growing and growing. The secularization we often associate with the late nineteenth century can obscure the massive missionary infrastructure that had arisen by the end of the century. The London Missionary Society's annual report from 1893 boasts 196 active missionaries and more than 200,000 "native adherents" across Africa and Asia. The latter number is almost certainly exaggerated, but the Society's stated goal of increasing the number of missionaries and funding by 50 percent was not. The Empire became an increasingly important space for the Anglican Church — as well as for the Methodists, the Unitarians, the Presbyterians, the Moravians, the Wesleyans, and various other denominations, all of which supported missionary societies that sent men and women abroad to preach "the good news."[106]

A conversion narrative seems an odd choice for Schreiner, who critics have noted was — by the latter half of her life — a dedicated atheist who found inspiration in Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin. But the stories of the Bible and its form, its poetry, still informed Schreiner's writing in profound ways. And, as Mike Kissack and Michael Titlestad argue, even for Schreiner, "it is difficult to separate religion from morality" (26). In writing *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland,* then, Schreiner appropriated the rhetoric and the genre of Christian conversion for very secular ends; namely, to dissuade other men, other potential Peters, from going to war.

In December 1896, Schreiner penned a letter to her brother, William Philip Schreiner: "There is coming a big awakening one of these days … The spirit of the Lord is upon me & I could prophesy – but I refrain." Despite this protestation, Schreiner predicted that "the whole

[106] Rüther et al describe mid-nineteenth-century South Africa as "one of the most competitive mission fields in the world" (105).

English nation will stand up, the evil half simply to smash the cursed Dutchman, the best half of the nation simply because they have been made to believe that the English are being cruelly oppressed & illtreated by the Boers." The "big awakening" Schreiner foresaw came in October 1899, when Boer forces attacked several British colonial cities — largely in response to earlier British incursions — beginning sieges that would, eventually, draw the full force of the British Imperial military. As the two nations moved closer to war, Schreiner wrote and published *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*.

In what follows, I look at works by Schreiner, the South African writer and political activist, and Catherine Radziwiłł (1858-1941), a Lithuanian aristocrat who wrote a novel in response to Schreiner. Both wrote a form of a conversion narrative, a story that, in the words of Emily Heady, "permits a person who has gotten it wrong to mend his ways, to fix what was broken, and to firm up a new and improved self who will go on to tell the tale of what has happened" (1).[107] In the nineteenth century, conversion narratives could be autobiographical or ethnological, but were generally considered non-fiction.[108] Schreiner — and, to a lesser extent, Radziwiłł — construct a mimetic South Africa, only to break that mimeticism with the supernatural introduction of a physical manifestation of Jesus. This breaking, a rupture of form, highlights the tension, particularly for Schreiner, between her choice of genre and her political goals.

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[107] For more on conversion and the history of missionary societies in the British Empire, see Tony Ballantyne's *Entanglements of Empire* (2014), Hayden J.A. Bellenoit's *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India* (2007), and Esme Cleall's *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire* (2012).

[108] While the broad genre of conversion narrative *can* include everything from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1836) to Edwin Abbott's *Flatland* (1884), these more rightly fall into the category of *roman à thèse*, whereas I am interested in the constraints and — to use Caroline Levine's language — the affordances posed by colonial conversion narratives. Similarly, I have left off works such as *Tales for the Bush* (1847) by Mary Theresa Vidal (1815-73), a collection of short stories with hyper-specific lessons aimed at the already religious, such as the importance of keeping the Sabbath in colonial Sydney.

Both authors use, in Heady's language, the "figural familiarity" (11) of the conversion narrative to resist some of the more barbaric acts of imperial violence, though, in doing so, the writers shift the scene of violence from Indigenous bodies onto white settler colonialists. Both writers used the form of the colonial conversion narrative to challenge the validity of imperial violence, but by focusing on the redemption of violent white characters, the texts either fail to adequately represent violence against Indigenous peoples or do so in ways that dehumanize them, reducing them to props in white settlers' morality tales. Schreiner and Radziwiłł had contradictory political aims, but both shift the violence of empire from Indigenous bodies onto white settler colonialists in ways that, ultimately, foreclose a critique of empire. In trying to imagine a Christian ethos for the frontier, these writers are unable to grapple meaningfully with violence against Indigenous peoples. Their novels present Indigenous bodies as sites of moral and religious trial instead of individuals imbued with their own spark, their own piece of the divine. And while Schreiner's text might appear as the more racially and politically progressive, Radziwiłł's conversion narrative systematically but critically contemplates the very process of settler colonialism in Southern Africa.

More broadly, both writers are intervening in debates about the role of Christianity in imperial spaces. In 1865, the Bishop of Natal, John Colenso, caused an outrage when he published a long essay on the historical veracity of The Bible, in which he argued that the first five books of the Old Testament "cannot possibly have been written by Moses … and further, that the (so-called) Mosaic narrative … cannot be regarded as *historically true*" (emphasis in original).[109] Though Colenso was rehearsing arguments from the German high critics, he explained in the introduction that the impetus for his investigation was his "communion" with

[109] Colenso, J.W. *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined*. London, 1865, pg. 26.

the Zulus. "Avail[ing] [himself] freely of their criticisms … [and] their objections and difficulties," Colenso wanted to parse the historically verifiable from the allegorical and metaphorical, though he remained a devout Anglican throughout.[110] Writing in 1966, critic A.O.J. Cockshut sympathized with Colenso's unease: "For although, in theory, the Bible was supreme and unquestionable for the theological school to which Colenso belonged, it was not asked in practice to bear so much weight by those who remained in England" (218). Because of the skepticism of the Indigenous Africans, Colenso was forced to confront the inadequacy of Christian doctrine and the disbelief from peoples with their own creation stories, their own cultures, their own beliefs.[111] What was assumed to be a complete and totalizing system — Christian theology, whatever the various proselytizing sects then pursuing converts in British or Dutch South Africa — revealed its own limitations when faced with the voices of Indigenous peoples. Colenso was pummeled in the contemporary press and became involved in a lengthy debate about jurisdiction with the more orthodox Bishop of Cape Town. Even *Punch*, the long-running London satire magazine, published a poem called "Colenso the Brave," which implied that Colenso's doubts might have sprung from "an African mead."[112]

Just five years before, in Southern Australia, the Bishop of Adelaide had come to a very different conclusion. Appearing before the South Australian parliament's Select Committee on Aborigines, the Lord Bishop of Adelaide, Augustus Short, said the need to convert the Indigenous was paramount. In the transcripts of the hearing, an unidentified politician attempts

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[110] Colenso, J. W. "The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined." *Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth Century: Selected Documents*, edited by A.O.J. Cockshut, University of Nebraska Press, 1966, pg. 219.

[111] For more on the broader religious debates of the Victorian era and its relation to literature, see Robert Lee Wolff's *Gains and Losses* (1977), Elisabeth Jay's *The Religion of the Heart* (1979), and, more recently, Charles LaPorte's *Victorian Poetics and the Changing Bible* (2012) and Susan Colón's *Victorian Parables* (2012).

[112] "Colenso the Brave." *Punch* (London, England), Saturday, April 01, 1865; pg. 136. *New Readerships.*

to clarify, "Supposing that in endeavoring to Christianize [the Indigenous], you are in reality assisting to destroy them, do you not think that it would be inadvisable to injure their bodily health?" What was the use in saving their souls, the member asks, if — in so doing — we end their lives? Short replied that, while he did not agree that Christianization, which took among its many forms the kidnapping of children and the corralling of Indigenous people into sometimes derelict missionary outposts, would affect the Indigenous people's health, conversion must occur at any cost.[113] "I would rather they died as Christians than drag out a miserable existence as heathens. I believe that the race will disappear either way."[114] To Short, the answer was clear. Whereas in America, the founder of the Carlisle School had announced his intention to "Kill the Indian and save the man," Short seemed focused on the first half of the famous motto and troublingly unconcerned with the latter.[115] There could be no challenge to the closed, totalizing system of nineteenth-century Christianity. Either the Indigenous peoples of Australia adapt to Christianity or they must be annihilated.

Women throughout the empire were also deeply involved in these conversations, though often in the form of novels or short stories, or, as Julie Melnyk argues in her contribution to the *History of British Women's Writing*, through religious tracts and devotional poetry.[116] Melnyk argues that while women were barred from theological discussions, marked by "rational and

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[113] The leaders of the London Missionary Society were aware of the dangers, writing in the 1870 annual report that "in many of the South Sea Islands, the population converted to Christianity has decreased instead of increasing" before admitting "There seems to be some fearful mortality that always attends the first appearance of contagious diseases in the midst of nations amongst whom those diseases do not, as in Europe, permanently abide."

[114] "Lord Bishop of Adelaide examined." *Aborigines in White Australia: A Documentary History of the Attitudes Affecting Official Policy and the Australian Aborigine, 1697-1973*. Edited by Sharman N Stone. Heinemann Educational Books, 1974, pg. 75.

[115] Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2014, pg. 151.

[116] Beside the more canonical women authors who dealt with faith, such as Elizabeth Gaskell in *Ruth* (1853), Christina Rosetti in *Annus Domini* (1874) or Margaret Oliphant in several of her works, Melnyk discusses women writing in England who were famous in their time but are now largely left out of British literary canons, including Hannah More (1745-1833), Sarah Smith (1832-1911), and others.

analytical public discourse that made truth claims about God," women were deeply engaged in *religious* discussions, the "more embodied" side of the debate that "was simultaneously private and public" (178). A writer such as Charlotte Yonge (1823-1901) would not have been invited to respond to Colenso's publication from the pulpit or the university lectern,[117] let alone the nation's more prominent periodicals, such as *The Fortnightly Review*, but as a longtime editor of the *Monthly Packet*, a magazine founded to articulate the mission of the Oxford Movement, and as a religious novelist, she "would play a pivotal role" in marketing the Anglican church's missionary society, the Supporters of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.[118] White middle-class Victorian women were typically denied access to classical education, but knowledge of the Bible was a perquisite for literate women. When women used fiction to enter the debate, many of those works fell into the so-called feminized genres: sentimental novels, romances, or, as I argue in this chapter, the colonial conversion narrative. As in earlier chapters, my argument here is a generic one, namely that these women used the form of the colonial conversion narrative to challenge the validity of imperial violence, but by focusing on the redemption of violent white characters, the texts fail to adequately represent violence against Indigenous peoples in ways that dehumanizes them, reducing them to props in white settlers' morality tales.[119] The failure of these conversion narratives — a genre often used in the

[117] Girton College at Cambridge, the first fully accredited women's college at either Cambridge or Oxford, was founded only in 1869, with Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville at Oxford following in 1879. For more on the fight for Girton and the debates about women's education, see Laura Morgan Green's *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Literature*.

[118] Walton, Susan. "Charlotte Yonge: Marketing the Missionary Story." *Women's Writing*, Vol. 17, no. 2, August, 2010, pg. 236.

[119] Kirsten Rüther *et al* argue "The European conversion narrative can be traced back to the earliest days of Christianity" — such as in St. Augustine's autobiographical *Confessions* — "but assumed particular character after the Reformation" (4). Protestant sects lend themselves to autobiographical conversion narratives as they often emphasize a less mediated relationship between the individual believer and the Divine.

nineteenth-century to defend imperial expansion — to account for Indigenous peoples is, at least partly, a failure of genre.

Schreiner's *Trooper Peter*

Schreiner's novella is a generic stew: the setting of an imperial adventure story, the landscape descriptions of naturalism, the moralizing of an editorial, and the religious invocations of a missionary society pamphlet. The original frontispiece, which Steve Attridge describes as depicting "three black Africans hanging from a tree, watched by a group of whites, presumably their murderers and members of the Chartered Company," further complicates *Trooper Peter* and aligns Schreiner's text more closely with the work of Ida B. Wells and other anti-lynching activists (186).[120] Subsequent editions, according to editor Marion Friedman, appeared without the photograph, "which never reappeared" (qtd. In Walters and Fogg, 93). This fusion of genres has irked critics. Elleke Boehmer calls the text "a relentless parable-exposé" (1998, xxiii). For Joyce Berkman, *Trooper Peter* is "a virtual pacifist allegory" (68). Or, as Burdett summarizes, Schreiner's Jesus "moves between timeless parable and allegory, and the historical present of South Africa, with no respect whatsoever for generic convention" (135). However, such comments assume that Schreiner's genre was literary fiction or realism. When classified as a colonial conversion narrative, the fixed line between the real and the eschatological becomes less clear and less important. That the colonial conversion narratives I examine in this article work from a realist frame speaks to the intended audience of the texts. Attridge credits the novella more for its content than its form, calling it an allegory "offer[ing] the most concise and eloquent

[120] The photograph was changed for the British edition. See also Paul Walter and Jeremy Fogg's "The Short Sorry Tale of *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* and Its Frontispiece."

analysis of the political and economic realities underlying British presence in South Africa," particularly insofar as Schreiner configures the critique "by employing the idea of Christian conversion," thereby "undermining … those who subscribed to a theological dimension in colonial activity" (186). Such a reading works only if one ignores the novel's redemption of a violent white supremacist. Certainly, Schreiner attacks the violence inherent in colonial expansion, but she does not question the centrality of the white protagonist. She was, after all, writing for a white audience. Peter is both the protagonist and the model for Schreiner's intended audience.

When the novella begins, Peter Halket is alone and lost, making camp among "the remains of a burnt kraal" (an Afrikaaner word for a livestock enclosure or farm), "where a month before the Chartered Company's forces had destroyed a native settlement" (5).[121] Amidst the ashes of an Indigenous farm, Jesus visits Peter.[122] This evocation of death makes the ponderous stranger feel more like a haunting than a divine interlocutor. Jesus preaches broadly anti-imperial politics. After Jesus convinces young Peter to "bear the weight" of a moral life, Peter returns to his camp, changed (53). His fellow soldiers find an African man hiding in a hole near their camp and, suspecting he's a spy, the captain orders him to be hanged at dawn. Then Peter intervenes, as recounted by another soldier: "'Up steps Peter Halket, right before the Captain, and pulls his front lock – you know the way he has? … I'll never forget it to my dying day … [Peter] started, how did we know this [man] was a spy at all; it would be a terrible thing to kill him if we weren't quite sure'" (74-5). Peter ends his sermon to the captain with the grand idealism of the stranger:

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[121] "Halket" or "Halkett" is a Scottish surname, which could reflect the so-called "martial race ideology" of the nineteenth century, which saw Scots Highlanders as particularly suited to fight in British frontier wars. For more, see Heather Street's *Martial Races: The Military, Race, and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture* (2004). Peter's initial cowardice and eventual death makes his surname fittingly ironic.

[122] The "stranger" is a recurring motif in Schreiner's writing. Two different strangers impart philosophical lessons to the characters in *African Farm*.

"All men were brothers, and God loved a black man as well as a white" (75). The Captain responds by ordering Peter to kill the man in the morning, but, during the night, Peter frees him. In the ensuing fracas, the Captain kills Peter. Some of the soldiers understand that Peter's death was no accident, though the novel implies the captain will face no punishment for his action, and Peter's martyrdom will be meaningless in the grand scheme of empire.

The text's depiction of the salvation of Peter, a character who "has killed, raped, and plundered" for the enrichment of the Chartered Company, only reinforces the limits of the genre (Lewis 171). Peter is a layered metonym, standing in for British volunteers in the Cape Colony, white settler-colonists writ large, a figurative approach which simultaneously broadens the novella's critique but also undermines that critique through Peter's redemption. If Peter is meant to serve as the cipher for Anglo-colonists emigrating to South Africa, his salvation then excuses the violence that these settler-colonists enact. Even the novella's emphasis on his childlike nature works to sanitize the violence we, as readers, know he has committed in his pursuit of personal gain. Peter "lived in the world immediately about him, and let the things of moment impinge on him, and fall off again as they would, without much reflection," but also he assumes that once the British have sufficiently subjugated the Indigenous groups, the Chartered Company will reward him with Mashona and Matabele slaves to work stolen land (8).[123] In Monsman's terms, Peter is "both a murderous mercenary and an overgrown child who embodies less the banality of evil than its puerility, evil's use of the weak to accomplish its ends" (Monsman 110). Peter has a hazy dream that simply being white will be enough to guarantee his fortune and, through enslaved labor, his life of leisure.

[123] Mashona and Matabele are English corruptions of Shona and Ndebele, Indigenous ethnic groups that belong to the wider Bantu peoples in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Stranger in the novel emphasizes certain themes to Peter through their wandering conversation. The first — and the one to which The Stranger returns again and again — is the universality of man. When The Stranger arrives, for example, Peter notices his dark complexion, "aquiline features" and "heavy locks of dark hair," and initially, Peter thinks his new companion is Sudanese, before he wonders if the man is Jewish (16-7). "'Yes; I am a Jew'" the man answers, the first of many quite explicit clues that the wandering stranger is Jesus (17). When Peter attempts to pin down the stranger's national affiliation, whether this man represents a nation antagonistic or friendly to The Chartered Company's stated goals, the Stranger replies,

> I am not more with one people than with another …. The Frenchman is not more to me than the Englishman, the Englishman than the Kaffir,[124] the Kaffir than the Chinaman. I have heard … the black infant cry as it crept on its mother's body and sought for her breast as she lay dead in the roadway. (35)

The stranger here invokes the image of an Indigenous woman with child, a regular trope for depicting Indigenous personhood, such as in Felicia Hemans' "The Indian Woman's Death-Song" (1828) and, in the context of the settler colonies, Eliza Hamilton Dunlop's "The Aboriginal Mother" (1838). The ignorant Peter tries to impress the man with tales of military and sexual conquest, including references to the rape of Indigenous women, to which the stranger generally does not respond.[125] Articulating his dream, Peter excitedly justifies the enslavement of

[124] Adopted from the Arabic term for non-Muslim, "kaffir" was first a neutral term for the Nguni peoples of Southern Africa before becoming, according to the *OED*, "a word of great racial and political sensitivity," widely applied during the Apartheid era to any black inhabitant of South Africa in a derogatory manner. Use of the word is now "legally actionable" under South African law. When Schreiner was writing *Trooper Peter*, the word had not yet attained its purely negative connotation.

[125] Paula Krebs, Anne McClintock, and others have written convincingly about the critique of the sexual exploitation of Indigenous women in the novel, epitomized by Peter's taking of a "wife" who eventually steals his weapon and flees to the hills, presumably to take violent action against the colonizers, though such action is not narrativized.

Indigenous peoples: "We don't come here to work; it's all very well in England, but we've come here to make money" (28). The stranger, agitated, says, "I hear far off … the sound of weeping, and the sound of blows. And I hear the voices of men and women calling to me" (29). His catholicity of spirit is in direct opposition to Peter's naïve nationalism.

The passage explicitly evokes the Sermon on the Mount, or chapters 5-7 in the Gospel of Matthew, one of the most quoted passages in the New Testament. Eight of The Beatitudes first appear in this speech, including "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"; "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."[126] In these verses, Matthew does not write "rules to be literally followed in every situation" but rather "key examples and a method that were to be memorized and internalized by serious disciples."[127] The Beatitudes are, in a sense, a genre in themselves that Schreiner mobilizes to ground her critique in a form that would have been familiar to her readers. Schreiner's Jesus emphasizes the inherent humanity of the Indigenous against whom Peter has waged war. The critique is not subtle, and it is not meant to be. The *conversion* of Schreiner's conversion narrative is supposed to be not only from agnostic to Christian but also from agent of empire to anti-colonialist.

Schreiner then embeds another narrative within the Stranger's tale, a sort of palimpsest of stories meant to help frame the evils of the violent colonialism practiced by Rhodes' Chartered Company. As Jesus forces Peter to question his position and the disastrous effects of British imperial expansion — to weight material riches against the betterment of his soul — Jesus tells the story of a beleaguered Cape Town minister. It is a clever twist on typical sermons: instead of

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[126] Matthew 5:3-7. *The Bible*. King James Version, *BibleGateway*.
[127] Boring, M. Eugene. Review of *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, by Hans Dieter Betz, *The Journal of Religion*, January 1998, pg. 101.

a preacher repeating one of Jesus's parables, Jesus imparts an allegorical tale about a white settler-colonist trying to carve ethical boundaries from a frontier world of violence and exploitation. The Cape Town minister, "small of stature and small of voice," begins by reading from 1 Kings 21, the story of Ahab and Jezebel's plot to murder Naboth to gain his land, which his congregation follows. But when the Minister closes his Bible and opens the Blue Book Report on the Select Committee on the Jameson Raid and begins reading, some of the wealthier congregants leave, as does the minister's wife. He excoriates them, saying, "the first story I have read you is one of the oldest stories of the world: the story I am about to read you is one of the newest. Truth is not more truth because it is three thousand years old, nor is it less truth because it is of yesterday" (40). When his wife confronts him, she argues, "You have not a single Boer in your congregation!," implying that it is the other group of white settlers who are the true evildoers. When she tries to find her husband a suitable adversary, she reaches back to the first book: "If it is necessary for you to attack some one, why don't you attack the Jews for killing Christ, or Herod, or Pontius Pilate; why don't you leave alone the men who are in power today, and who with their money can crush you!" (41). The Bible and the Blue Book report "are two books, Schreiner's text implies ... which both tell the same story of power, greed and manipulation" (Burdett 134). The Cape Town congregation "listens to the former, [but] walks out offended during the latter because it fails to hear in it the proper message of the Christian text" (Burdett 134-5). These critiques *perform* anti-imperialism, but Peter himself is absolved of his crimes. Schreiner wants to center the powerful elite behind the violence — Jameson, Rhodes — but, in so doing, she excuses the crimes committed by the soldiers on the ground. *Trooper Peter* preaches peace and sacrifice but never justice.

In the second chapter, the narration shifts to a chorus of unnamed soldiers discussing their work. The conversion narrative changes point-of-view to confirm that Peter's is not "that faith without works" that James 2:20 calls "dead." They complain about the poor pay, the dangerous missions. One soldier wonders whether Leander Jameson deserved his punishment: "Jameson only did what he was told. He had to obey orders, like the rest of us. He didn't make the plan, and he's got the punishment" (69). They echo the minister's wife. *Who is really to blame,* they demand. If the British government can indict Jameson, it can indict these soldiers. It is a moral quandary for which Schreiner has no answer. If the soldiers doing the killing are not culpable, then who is? The text answers Cecil Rhodes and the broader, impersonal systems that encourage and incentivize colonists to dispossess the Indigenous, but the violent structures of white supremacism do not operate without soldiers such as these. Policies of dispossession and invasion are not enacted without soldiers with guns. They then excitedly tell the story of Peter's confrontation with the Captain. "'It's the best thing I ever saw or heard in my whole life!' He rolled half over on his side and laughed at the remembrance" (73). Peter objected to the captain's treatment of an Indigenous man found "hidden away in a hole in the bank, not five hundred yards" from the camp (73). When the soldiers notice that the man has two bullets in his leg, the captain "blew and swore, and said the [racial epithet] was spy, and was to be hanged tomorrow" (74). Peter repeats much of what Jesus had told him about the dangers of inflicting violence, about the right of one people to conquer another, to no effect. When Peter frees the man from his restraints, the Indigenous man escapes to an unknown fate, and Peter is killed by his commanding officer. The novella wants this scene to convey a sense of brotherhood between Peter and the captured men, a glimpse of interracial solidarity amidst violent, genocidal wars.

The text thus reveals its own limitations. As the chorus of soldiers discusses Peter and the captain's fight, one asks, "'What did the native say?'" "'Oh, he didn't say anything,'" another answers, "There wasn't a soul in the camp could have understood him if he had'" (74). The unnamed Indigenous man has no place in this story but as the object of imperial violence. The structure of the colonial conversion narrative demands that he exist as a test of Peter's faith, but he has no internal life of his own, no name, no agency. Had he spoken, the soldier reminds us, it would not have mattered. His untranslated words would garner no sympathy because they would not be understood. Jesus tells Peter that he hears the cries of all people, but as readers of *Trooper Peter*, we are asked to hear only those of the white settlers of South Africa.

Confined by Schreiner's use of the conversion narrative as the salvation of a white soldier, *Trooper Peter* cannot give agency to African characters. This is a limitation of both Schreiner's novella *and* the genre as Schreiner employed it. She was perfectly capable of giving voice to Africans in other texts[128] and inveighing more directly against imperialism and war in her nonfiction. When the soldiers bury Peter, the text eulogizes the harmony achieved through death: "And, one hour after Peter Halket had stood outside the tent looking up, he was lying under the little tree, with the red sand trodden down over him, in which a black man and a white man's blood were mingled" (87).[129] We are meant to imagine a poignant moment, showing that, as objects of imperial violence, a white soldier and a black Indigenous man have achieved communion. Monsman describes the scene as "symboliz[ing] redemptive love and brotherhood" (121), but that is, perhaps, too generous a reading, one that too easily bridges the racial and

[128] Infamously, as Anne McClintock argues, *African Farm* likewise features silent and silenced African characters, but Schreiner's posthumously published *From Man to Man* features speaking African characters, even if those characters are portrayed in stereotypical ways.
[129] Burdett, Clayton, and others have written that this ending also absolves Peter of his sexual exploitation of Indigenous women.

historical canyon that separates these men. Similarly, Lewis argues that "Dying in an act of blatant defiance of the Captain aligns Peter with African victims of colonialism, and in doing so makes him a victim of a system he has rejected, and which, Schreiner hoped, her readers would actively reject" (175). "Aligns" seems to be a euphemism for "replaces." Peter came to South Africa as part of a specifically white-supremacist mission, bolstered by reports of the abundance of diamonds and gold and land. He has pillaged, murdered, assaulted, kidnapped, and raped. Through his conversion, he begins to question this violence but not the system that engendered it. This is the story of the conversion of *Peter*, his spiritual salvation. In this, Schreiner's novella resembles nineteenth-century conversion narratives, which, while they varied greatly, were stories of men[130] living sinful lives who found — or were brought to — Jesus and then dedicated themselves to spread his Good Word. Schreiner's narrative matches those from which she likely drew inspiration in the tendency to "criticize[ ] societal developments in their country of origin, whose inhabitants," Ruther et al argued, "were becoming increasingly estranged from 'true Christianity'" (Rüther et al 154).

The text positions Peter as a martyr to an enlightened Christianity, while "highlight[ing] the misanthropic behavior of both his officer, who shoots him … and the Chartered Company, which endorses the officer" (Attridge 187). But this requires the evacuation of the black African man's agency and history. As Burdett notes, Schreiner wrote to a friend in 1896 that "the cause of the native" was "the only true test of a man's progress[ive] attitude."[131] *Trooper Peter* would fail such a test. The Indigenous man fades into obscurity, the blood that had oozed from his wounds helping to make Peter a more potent symbol for the suffering of white anti-imperialists

[130] As Rüther *et al* note, it was much more common to write about male converts, which both reflected and reinforced gendered hierarchies at missionary outposts.
[131] *'Olive Schreiner to Mary Sauer nee Cloete, 26 May 1896, NLSA Cape Town, Special Collections, Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription,' 9-10.*

such as Schreiner, legitimizing the colonial mission, then, so long as it follows a strict moral code. Some literary critics have similarly ignored the material differences of race in Schreiner's story, reading the racial hierarchy as metaphorizing Peter's id, ego, and superego. Clayton, in her otherwise laudable biography, writes, "*Trooper Peter* becomes a richer narrative when Christ and the Lo Magundis[132] black man are seen to be aspects of Peter himself, respectively his higher conscience and his sexual energy and individuality" (99). In such a formulation, the black man is once again denied any humanity, reduced to Peter's dark id in an argument that rehearses some of the most racist tropes about black men and their supposed lasciviousness.[133]

An Answer

Schreiner's publication provoked a furious answer in the form of Catherine Radziwiłł's *The Resurrection of Peter: A Reply to Olive Schreiner* (1900), a novel closer to crass political propaganda than literary critique that nonetheless clarifies some of what is at stake in Schreiner's novella. Though written just a few years apart, they are separated by the violent chasm of the Second Boer War, in which the British Empire's seeming invulnerability was brutally and publicly challenged. Though Radziwiłł wrote her text in an ongoing effort to smooth relations with her one-time patron, Cecil Rhodes, the text stumbles into accurate critiques of Schreiner's dream of a pacified South Africa. *The Resurrection* vacillates between parody and imitation while attempting to discredit Schreiner's critique by recontextualizing Schreiner's imagined Jesus and by arguing that Schreiner's motivation for writing *Trooper Peter* was a failed attempt

[132] Lo Magundi was an earlier name for an area in present-day Zimbabwe.
[133] Clayton adds that Christ and the black man "are also more than that and work at other levels of the narrative," but the tendency to collapse characters of color into psychological aspects of a white protagonist is precisely what Chinua Achebe challenges in his withering critique of *Heart of Darkness* or what Gayatri Spivak finds so objectionable in Gilbert and Gubar's reading of *Jane Eyre*.

at romancing Rhodes. In Radziwiłł's text, a whitewashed Jesus reconverts Peter, convincing him not only that empire is a force for moral good but that Rhodes himself most perfectly embodies this ethics of expansion. Her arguments are more explicitly racist than Schreiner's, yet through Radziwiłł's clumsy Eurocentrism, the moral failings and generic constraints of *Trooper Peter* come more clearly into focus.

Radziwiłł was born Ekaterina Adamevna Rzewusky in 1858, the only daughter of an exiled Polish aristocrat living handsomely in Russia. The young Countess Rzewusky could, according to a biography by Brian Roberts, trace her lineage back to various Polish and Lithuanian kings, including a Wenceslaus, though not the one oft-toasted in song. At her birth, her father owned 45,000 acres near Kiev, an area roughly the size of modern-day Washington, D.C., making him one of the largest estate-holders in Russia outside the Romanov family. At fifteen, she was married to the Polish prince Willhelm Radziwiłł, then an officer in the Prussian army. Radziwiłł moved in pan-European aristocratic circles but spent much of her literary life exposing the flaws and sordid adventures of European nobility in scandalous tell-alls, for which she was, first, banished from Berlin and, later, deported from Tsarist Russia. Her books were noted more for their salacious content than for her style. She was, by all accounts, highly educated and fluent in five languages, which enabled her to move from city to city as she lampooned members of the aristocracy.

Radziwiłł's personal relationship with Rhodes is complicated and difficult to parse from historical accounts that emphasize their own archetypal versions of Radziwiłł as either fame or money hungry. After meeting at a London dinner party in 1896, she and Rhodes exchanged mostly inconsequential letters, including one in which Radziwiłł attached a golden locket for Rhodes, one of the peculiar behaviors that prompted Rhodes' aides to call her "Princess

Razzledazzle."[134] She followed Rhodes back to South Africa, where she sought his help to establish a political journal, *Greater Britain,* as a pro-imperial pamphlet. The paucity of reliable sources makes it difficult to know if Radziwiłł's interest in Rhodes was personal, political, or both. What we do know is that sometime after arriving in South Africa, she began asking Rhodes for money, and that he eventually agreed to pay her debts if she would leave the country. Instead, she began forging his name on checks that eventually amounted to more than £24,000, leaking rumors that the two were engaged, and hinting that she had damaging, private material. She was arrested, charged, and found guilty of forgery. She spent sixteen months in a South African jail. Rhodes died just before the trial began. After she was released, she attempted, unsuccessfully, to sue Rhodes' estate for money she swore he promised to her. She eventually moved to America and faded from celebrity.

In Radziwiłł's conversion narrative, British imperialism is not only a force for good, but Cecil Rhodes himself embodies Christian virtue, which can be read as either manifestly imperialist or a project in recuperating a personal relationship soured by financial chicanery. Her version is a direct sequel to Schreiner's, as the recently murdered Peter is resurrected by the *true* Christ, who then proceeds to convert Peter to a more imperialist Christianity that recasts Schreiner's tale as dangerously idealistic. If Schreiner's Jesus is supposed to embody the Sermon on the Mount, then Radziwiłł's is a manifestation of Kipling's "White Man's Burden." Schreiner's imagined Jesus wants the reader to empathize with the plight of Africans while Radziwiłł's wants us to empathize with Rhodes. The text of *The Resurrection of Peter* returns to the kopje from the beginning of *Trooper Peter*, as two angels ask Peter a series of pointed,

[134] Rodriguez McRobbie, Linda. "Catherine Radziwiłł, The Stalker Princess." *Princesses Behaving Badly: Real Stories from History without the Fairy-Tale Endings*, Quirk Books, 2013, pg. 101.

rhetorical questions that push him to reject Schreiner's utopian vision. This Christ wants Peter to acknowledge the righteousness of empire and, specifically, of Cecil Rhodes. Jesus says of Rhodes, "'You want to know what that man is? … He is a Creator'" (62). Attridge writes that Radziwiłł's Christ "is, to some extent, conflated with that of Rhodes" (187). But by having Christ refer to Rhodes as "Creator," with the capital "C," Radziwiłł is conflating Rhodes not with Jesus but with God. In *The Resurrection,* Jesus has come to Peter to preach the good news of Cecil Rhodes, not the other way around.

Radziwiłł's Jesus echoes what David Spurr characterizes as the "colonial imagination," which "takes for granted that the land and its resources belong to those who are best able to exploit them according to the values of a Western commercial and industrial system" (31). This Jesus does not even physically resemble the visitor from Schreiner's text. He is no longer the somber Semite in search of a warm fire. Peter "saw a tall Man, thin and slight, with fair locks hanging down His back, and sweet, sad, solemn, mournful, luminous eyes … He was dressed in a long, clinging, white robe, and His whole figure stood out clear and distinct in the darkness" (14-5). There was no commonly accepted physical description of Jesus in the nineteenth century — the Gospels themselves do not contain a single reference to his physical appearance. Writers did begin to racialize him, however, or, as Jefferson J. A. Gatrall writes, "[i]n becoming historical, Jesus also acquired race (116). Lew Wallace, in his *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880), [135] the best-selling "Jesus novel" of the nineteenth century, was also the most popular depiction of Jesus as "Greco-Jewish," an ethnographically informed portrait that emphasized his Semitic roots (Gatrall 117). Radziwiłł's depiction fits neatly — dangerously so — with the later

[135] As Gatrall notes, in what was likely the most inventive physical representation of Christ in the nineteenth century, the 1899 staging of *Ben-Hur* used a "25,000 candlepower light" to portray Jesus (112).

trope of the "Aryan Jesus," that "erect[ed] a racial divide between his 'white' complexion and the 'bronze' face of his followers" (Gatrall 123). This Jesus believes in the white supremacist mission of the British Empire and converts Peter to believe it, as well. This Jesus believes in the white supremacist mission of the British Empire and converts Peter to believe it, as well.

The novel's contradictions and inconsistencies mount. For instance, early in the text, Jesus asks, "This is a land which God has endowed with treasures; do you think He did so with the intention of letting them moulder away in the depths of the earth where He has placed them?" (55-6). Without explaining what it might mean for gold or diamonds to rot, Radziwiłł's Jesus quickly answers, "No; they were put there to be found and used by man, used for noble purposes, for a high moral aim, for the good of the world and the glory of the Almighty" (56). As Peter tries to understand the trauma he just experienced, he wonders "What was it he had wished to do? Why, earn money of course, but what for? Well, to help his mother, his friends, those who needed it" (11). Radziwiłł's "of course" is telling of her tone. The reader of *The Resurrection* should see the absurdity of Schreiner's anti-imperialism without close inspection. "So far all was right," Peter thinks, "but then this stranger had come and told him it was wrong to wish for money, that even if he had it he would not profit by it" (11). It is a disingenuous critique of Schreiner, one that divorces the economic from the moral, the profit of imperialism from its violence. Radziwiłł's Jesus echoes what David Spurr characterizes as the "colonial imagination," which "takes for granted that the land and its resources belong to those who are best able to exploit them according to the values of a Western commercial and industrial system" (31). Neither does this Jesus physically resemble the visitor from Schreiner's text. He is no longer the somber Semite in search of a warm fire. Peter "saw a tall Man, thin and slight, with fair locks hanging down His back, and sweet, sad, solemn, mournful, luminous eyes … He was dressed in

a long, clinging, white robe, and His whole figure stood out clear and distinct in the darkness" (14-5). Christ is literally whitened in Radziwiłł's text, differentiating Christ from the "darkness" of the African kopje, emphasizing what Achebe identifies as "the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization."[136]

Christ then proceeds to ask Peter a series of rhetorical questions, parodying Schreiner's text, which is itself an adaptation of Jesus' Socratic method of preaching in the Gospels: "What is life but a veldt, what is it but a desert, a waste, in which one must find one's way, and in which one dare not look right or left for fear of meeting with a road which is not the right one to take" (19). He pushes Peter to reject the false teachings of the other stranger, in what quickly becomes a thinly veiled attack on Schreiner herself. "'Peter Simon Halkett,' said the Stranger, 'that being who spoke with such earnestness of the sufferings inflicted by a man on his fellow creatures, did he see him inflict those sufferings, or did he repeat what others had told him; above all, did he remember the good that man also has done?'" (24). Radziwiłł attacks Schreiner's credibility; had she *really* seen the horrors of empire? Whereas Schreiner's novella is informed by her credo that an artist "must paint what lies before him," Radziwiłł relies on racist tropes to accomplish her conversion.[137] Whereas Schreiner turns to Indigenous motherhood as a source of pride, Radziwiłł attacks it: "remember that in a dark continent unknown until now, there are children brought up in ignorance and superstition, women who do not even know how to take care of their own babes, and who themselves are treated like beasts of burden" (42). Her comments are unabashedly racist, casting Africa as the "dark continent" and, thereby, aligning itself with a long tradition of European writing about Africa. In a 1918 autobiography, Radziwiłł laments not

[136] Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." *The Massachusetts Review,* vol. 57 no. 1, 2016, pg. 15. *Project Muse*.
[137] Schreiner, Olive. "Preface to the Second Edition." *The Story of an African Farm*. Edited by Patricia O'Neill. Broadview, 2003, pg. 42.

visiting London sooner. “It must have been even more pleasant than it is now,” she wrote, “before South Africa had been invented, America had been discovered, and the various ghettos of the world had opened their doors to allow their former inmates to escape into a more hospitable land” (45-6). While she does not explicitly racialize those she thinks have ruined London, her intent is clear. Yet, she also wrote in an earlier, unauthorized biography of Rhodes, that “No other country in the world could have achieved such a success as did England [in] … making itself popular among nations whose independence it had destroyed” (ix).[138] It’s both a celebration and critique of the British imperial project.

In such a comparison, Schreiner’s novel reads as radically critical of imperialism. Even more, Radziwiłł’s text says explicitly that which Schreiner’s implies, most significantly when Radziwiłł’s Jesus tells Peter to encourage settlement in South Africa. “[S]ay to your sons and daughters, that it is time they should go and try to teach these poor people what trust in God and trust in one’s own strength can do” (42). In its climactic culmination, however, it is the Jesus of Radziwiłł’s imagination that truly reckons with the violent history of empire in South Africa. In this country, the “hills are still echoing with the groans of the wounded and the wail of the dying. Its rivers are still full of blood, and death fills with its awful presence its forests and its mountains” (81). In her readiness to defend Rhodes, Radziwiłł readily admits that he “has got a great work before him … the work of reconciliating the two white races … as well as of ameliorating the conditions of existence of their black brethren” (80-1). Radziwiłł astutely argues that Schreiner, and the white liberals she epitomizes, say that they want to help Indigenous Africans and the poor regardless of “race or colour,” but really they “would like to let them

[138] Radziwiłł, Catherine. *Cecil Rhodes: Man and Empire Maker*. London, 1918.

remain in a state of semi-domesticated barbarity, where they can be treated as beasts of burden one pets sometimes, but keeps always under severe control" (70).

Radziwiłł's forthrightness, though uneven, starkly contrasts against Schreiner's liberal ideology. In Schreiner's novella, the intertwined and mutually constitutive systems of white supremacy, imperial expansion, and industrial capitalism can be saved by lone voices: Peter, the reverend in Cape Town. Radziwiłł admits that the recent history of South Africa is one of death and violence. And while she argues that Rhodes is the man to "fix" this situation, she allows herself to think more systematically, more broadly than Schreiner's interpersonal empathy. In Schreiner's text, the telos of the genre, the redemption of a white soldier, subverts any anti-imperialist intention. Put another way, the aspirational meaning of Schreiner's conversion narrative is confounded by its form. Thematically, Peter's martyrdom redeems him. Narratively, the text's focus on that redemption thwarts the novella's attempts at meaningful critique.

Schreiner was disappointed at *Trooper Peter*'s reception, writing to her brother William, "Peter Halket has been apparently such a dead failure, in spite of its immense circulation. I do not believe it has saved the life of one n-----, … [and] it cost me, every thing."[139] Her brother Theo and sister Ettie adamantly supported Rhodes, and, after the publication of *Trooper Peter* and *Thoughts on South Africa*, Theo "made public private information" about Schreiner and her husband.[140] While Monsman compares *Trooper Peter* to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, writing that Schreiner "felt the same duty as Stowe to reform wrongs," their cultural impact could not be more different (13). While Schreiner attempted to write a Sermon on the Mount for a world ensconced in imperial violence, she instead confirmed her own place in a

[139] 'Olive Schreiner to William Philip ('Will') Schreiner, 29 June 1898, UCT Manuscripts & Archives. *Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription*. 76-80.
[140] "Theophilus Schreiner." *Olive Schreiner Letters Online.*

colonizing elite that might oppose or resent some of the more brutal aspects of imperialism but still largely saw white governance as synonymous with "progress." Melissa Miller Lee has asked if we, as critics, "feel the need to absolve those we analyze from their racism and desire to control and dominate groups of people who now are able to express just what that control and domination meant?" (239). It's a difficult question to answer, particularly with an author like Olive Schreiner. As much as some of her work seems progressive or radical — and, indeed, she sometimes used those labels for herself — a work like *Trooper Peter* reminds us of the limits of her politics and the genres within which she wrote.

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