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Responses to imperialism of four women writers at the Cape Eastern frontier in the nineteenth century

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3.2 Katrina

In Katrina: A Tale of the Karroo, Anna Howarth conceives of 'Otherness' as a site of freedom and potential development for women. This potential is embodied in a young Dutch woman, Katrina Marais. Katrina functions in the novel as a symbol of female achievement. Her ability to transcend the sphere of the conventionally feminine is implicitly attributed to her lifelong exemption from the training, discipline and etiquette of institutionalised gentility.

In contrast, the novel presents three Englishwomen who have had gentility automatically conferred upon them as their birthright. These women operate as textual foils for Katrina in that they represent the model of naturalised femininity to which she aspires. The reader is encouraged to measure her progress against them. By the end of the novel, Katrina's development or Bildung is complete. She achieves full heroic stature and, arguably, has a form of 'honorary masculinity' conferred upon her.

Katrina's achievements are rendered all the more exceptional in the light of Howarth's negative portrayal of Dutch people in general. The reader is encouraged to perceive Katrina as a prodigy among her own people. The Dutch are continually disparaged in the novel. It is emphasised that they are a 'race' apart from the English. They are constructed as stupid and slovenly, with a total disregard for the truth.

This attitude is established at the beginning of the novel when Howarth describes a visit by an English colonist, Richard Stanton, to the home of a Dutch family. Stanton's hosts, the Van Heerden's, are constructed as a 'typically' slovenly Dutch family. Stanton is shown to be continually disgusted by their numerous unhygienic outrages (KTK 3). The stupidity of the Dutch is demonstrated when Stanton tries to convince the Van Heerdens

of the necessity of universal vaccination to combat the small-pox epidemic that is raging in the district. Howarth shows that his exhortations are met with incomprehension and a lack of cooperation (KTK 6).

Howarth illustrates the 'inherent' dishonesty of the Dutch when Van Heerden accommodates Stanton for the night in a room occupied by a small-pox sufferer, telling him that the patient is only his son who has hurt his leg falling off a horse (KTK 8). The only Dutchman in the novel who is not afflicted by stupidity is Andries Bester. He is a ruthless and avaricious money-lender who charges ruinous rates of interest. Any young man who falls into his control is likely to be permanently crushed.

Katrina has been raised by her uncle, Andries Bester, and by her step-father, Johannes van Heerden. By the age of twenty, she has received no education and is completely illiterate. The only language she can speak is Dutch. She has never owned a pair of shoes, and her dresses are described as coarse rags. Despite these disadvantages, Katrina has escaped the twin taints of stupidity and vice to which both nature and nurture might have been supposed to incline her. The reason for her exemption from a 'racial' inheritance which afflicts the rest of her community, is to be found in a special 'blood legacy' that has been passed down to her from her father's family:

> Katrina was of a very different type from her stepfather and his own children. Her father, Mrs van Heerden's first husband, had a strain of French blood in him, being a descendant of one of the Huguenot families which settled in the Cape Colony after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Katrina took after her father, and it was this, perhaps, that gave her, in spite of her coarse dress and bare feet, a certain air of refinement (KTK 85).

It is not clear why an Englishwoman like Howarth should suppose French blood to have an ameliorating influence over Dutch blood.

Historically, Anglo-French relations were far more acrimonious than Anglo-Dutch relations. The reason for the ascendancy of Katrina's French blood may possibly be traced to a Victorian hierarchy of the European 'races', according to which the French were regarded as more cultured, refined and civilised than the Dutch[2].

This novel can be compared with Jan: An Afrikander which Howarth wrote the previous year. The premise of both texts is that the human character is formed to a large extent by influences in the 'blood'. The earlier novel dramatises the total mastery of this biological inheritance over the individual will. Jan is unable to fight the 'taint' in his blood.

Katrina: A Tale of the Karroo dramatises precisely the opposite scenario: the individual will is victorious against the biological imperative. Katrina's Dutch blood is only marginally assisted by a faint strain of French influence and she has also her 'deplorable' upbringing to combat. Her success in overcoming these 'disadvantages' is total. It is possible that Katrina succeeds where Jan fails because Dutch blood, however undesirable, was regarded as infinitely higher than Kaffir blood on the frontier 'Chain of Being'.

At the beginning of the novel, Katrina is portrayed as little more than a commodity. She is effectively the property of her step-father, to dispose of as he sees fit. He gives her in marriage to an Englishman named Allan Stanton without consulting her inclinations. She is powerless to resist the transaction that is conducted between her guardian and her future husband. Howarth shows that Katrina may effectively be bought and sold according to male whim because she lacks the social, financial

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2 In The Cape As I Found It, Beatrice Hicks writes that there is a snobbery among the Boers which causes them to deny their Dutch ancestry:

> But the worst of it is, at the Cape, that many of the better class will not own themselves to be Dutch. They adopt English ways and call themselves English, or turn and twist their names about and say they are of French extraction, thinking of the small band of Huguenot refugees who came out in the times of persecution. We went for a walk once round table Mountain, and all the way a young man was explaining to us that his name was Jourdain (pronounced French way) instead of Jordaan (pronounced Dutch way). As if it mattered! (CFI 180-181).

and familial structures that protect middle-class Englishwomen from such exploitation.

This initial condition of powerlessness is exacerbated by the fact that she has received no education. During the first few months of her marriage, she is depicted as little more than a cipher. She has no access to the written word or the English language, two of the most powerful weapons in the armoury of the English colonists on the Eastern Frontier. She is also emotionally immature and completely guileless.

At this stage of the novel, Katrina possesses many of the traditional characteristics of the Noble Savage - she is ignorant, innocent, child-like, and intellectually vacant. She has led a simple, pastoral existence, and has never concerned herself with matters beyond her limited domestic routine. Her dresses are little more than rags and she has not owned a pair of shoes in the first twenty years of her life: 'In spite of her twenty years and her womanly appearance, she was quite a child at heart, absolutely ignorant, and, so far, quite innocent' (KTK 89).

In the course of the narration, Katrina is compared several times with a Kaffir, both by Howarth, and by her fellow characters.[3] These comparisons serve to emphasise her association with a state of near-savagery. This association is strengthened by her robust physical appearance:

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3 Katrina is described by the narrator as having 'a set of white, even teeth which a Kafir might have envied' (KTK 85).

Elsewhere, her husband makes a similar comparison, but with disparaging effect:

> 'Katrina, you have shoes and stockings, have you not?'
> 'Yes, Allan, but I get tired of them sometimes.'
> 'Still, I must ask you to wear them always, Katrina, please. It is not nice for a white woman to go barefoot.'
> 'Why not?' asked Katrina.
> Allan found the question rather difficult to answer.
> 'Well,' he said, 'the Kafir women often go about with nothing but a blanket round them, and bare almost to the waist. You would not like to do that, would you?'
> 'Of course not,' said Katrina.
> 'But to go about with bare feet and legs is not much better, for a white woman,' continued Allan.
> Katrina did not see that at all, and felt annoyed with her husband for drawing any comparison between herself and a Kafir woman (KTK 173-174).

> She was very tall and upright, her figure was perfect, and she carried herself with a quite unconscious grace. Her hair, which was very soft and fine, and of a bright yellow-brown, was cut rather short, and clustered round her forehead and all over her head in thick natural curls. Her features were rather large but well formed, her eyes were of a genuine sky-blue (KTK 85; emphasis added).

Howarth frequently uses the word 'unconscious' in describing Katrina[4]. Katrina is unaware of her own beauty, grace and charms. This lack of self-consciousness is intrinsic to the myth of the Noble Savage. Katrina possesses the Noble Savage's ability to exist without self-reflection or affectation, because she has remained untainted by the vices of civilized existence. Her lack of self-consciousness would have been regarded as exceptional in Victorian society. According to Sally Mitchell, personal vanity was perceived as an undesirable but innately feminine trait (Mitchell, 52-53).

It may be inferred from Howarth's preoccupation with the imperative of biological inheritance, that Katrina owes her stature and appearance to a 'racial' heritage. This is corroborated by Howarth's depiction of Dutch women as physically large and masculine:

> The [Dutch] farmer's wife and his two strapping daughters, who were all three as tall and nearly as large as himself, were putting the supper on the table, with their muscular arms bared above the elbow (KTK 3).

This description occurs in the course of Richard Stanton's visit to the Van Heerden's farm. In the context of Stanton's distaste for his hosts and his surroundings, it is clearly intended to be

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[4] For example, when Katrina meets her husband's sister for the first time, she is described as follows: 'Her mind was so fully-preoccupied, that she was quite unconscious of herself, and all her graceful gestures and attitudes were perfectly natural,' (KTK 199). And in the company of Stanton's family, 'She was not aware of her own attractions, certainly not that the chief of them was her perfect naturalness' (KTK 253-254).

disparaging. In the case of Katrina, however, Howarth conceives of physical largeness as an asset which contributes towards her heroic stature. This exemplifies Howarth's tendency to favour the 'Other' as an individual over the 'Other' as a community. The qualities which she deplores in Dutch women in general are transformed into assets in Katrina.

Another important attribute of the Noble Savage is the possession of intrinsic, untaught virtue. Katrina is presented as having an instinctive facility to distinguish between right and wrong. Her moral sense is unclouded by societal influences and therefore unwavering. She is the only character in the novel who never strays from the paths of righteousness, or allows herself to be deceived by falsehood. Even Allan Stanton, her husband, is occasionally guilty of errors in judgement due to a misplaced sense of duty.

Conventionally, the Noble Savage is both whole and perfect in his simplicity. To tamper with his primitive state would be to destroy the source of his nobility.[5] Howarth, however, conceives of Katrina's innocence as a potential for development. It is a tabula rasa upon which anything may be inscribed.

After a few months of marriage, Katrina's husband undertakes to educate her. This process does not taint her innocence in any way; it merely taps her powerful dormant intelligence. Within six months, she has a competent knowledge of the English language and is able to 'write a very fair letter now, either in Dutch or in English' (KTK 196). Howarth frequently draws attention to the contrast between Katrina's present and past states: 'She had altered very much since her marriage, and the childlike, unthinking expression of her face had given place to an older and more womanly look' (KTK 188).

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5 In his 1965 study of the Noble Savage, Henri Baudet emphasises that it is the Noble Savage's 'exemption from our heavy burden of ancient culture' that leaves him 'untainted and good' (Baudet, 10). To confer 'civilisation' on the Noble Savage is therefore to taint his innate nobility.

It becomes increasingly apparent that Katrina has a powerful memory and an unusual ability to absorb knowledge. Her husband is astounded by these unsuspected talents and concedes that her intellectual abilities are greater than his own:

> Katrina showed herself a remarkably apt pupil, and showed an anxiety to learn, and a delight in acquired knowledge, which made Allan more ashamed every day of his first hasty estimate of her character. He had, from the beginning of his acquaintance with her, thought her much too good for Charlie [Allan's brother]; he owned now, with a very sincere humility, that she was in many respects superior to himself (KTK 178).

Allan's admission is remarkable because it does not accord with nineteenth-century opinions about feminine ability. Such attributes as a powerful intellect, and the ability to acquire knowledge and think logically belonged traditionally to the 'masculine' field of endeavour. It was considered both undesirable and impossible for women to trespass upon this field. In her study of images of women, Woman and the Demon, Nina Auerbach argues that women in the Victorian era were believed to be less intelligent than men because of their inferior brain weight (Auerbach, 12). It was also believed, as Elaine Showalter has shown, that they had a tendency to develop mental illnesses if educated (Showalter 1985, 136). Howarth conspicuously defies these popular stereotypes in her construction of the female 'Other'. Katrina is able to overcome 'feminine' limitations because they are not part of her personal cultural heritage. She not only equals but outstrips her husband in intellectual endeavour.

On another occasion, Allan again declares that his wife is his superior. In this case, her superiority is of a moral, rather than intellectual nature:

> "Katrina," exclaimed Allan suddenly, "you are a good woman.

> I shall never be worthy of you as long as I live. And I can never forgive myself for the wrong I did you, in marrying you" [...] "You are as much above me as the stars; and yet I dared to marry you against your will, just to serve my own purposes - a regular commercial transaction, - like the meanest fortune-hunter that ever toadied to an heiress" (KTK 220).

This declaration belongs to the Victorian chivalric convention whereby women were perceived as the curators of domestic morality. Auerbach has shown that in Victorian society there was 'an implacable association between womanhood and domestic purity' (Auerbach, 69). This association required that women be revered by men for their roles as nurturers and care-givers. They were believed to constitute the moral centre of the home and to provide a virtuous and stabilising influence.

Allan Stanton's declaration that he will never be 'worthy' of his wife and that she is 'as much above [him] as the stars' suggests that Howarth subscribes to this convention. Katrina's triumph lies in her self-induced transformation from an 'ignorant, characterless Dutch girl' (KTK 185) whom it is a degradation for an English gentleman to marry, to a traditional domestic icon in the chivalric mode.

In raising herself from her condition of near-savagery, Katrina achieves, in addition, a form of 'honorary masculinity'. Her successes cannot be measured according to traditional standards of femininity, but encroach upon the realm of the masculine. Marianne Hirsch argues in an article entitled 'Spiritual Bildung: the Beautiful Soul as Paradigm' that female characters in Victorian fiction are unable to achieve the same degree of mental and emotional growth as male characters (Hirsch, 26). Hirsch tries to show that female characters are inevitably trapped in a process of withdrawal from the community and that the only development of which they are capable is of an inward, spiritual nature (Hirsch, 26). Howarth's construction of Katrina

contradicts this theory. Katrina's growth-process is of an outward nature, enabling her to become a useful and hard-working member of a prosperous community. Her development takes place not in the private (feminine) realm of the spirit, but in the public (masculine) realm of duty and activity. Howarth shows that the public realm is not inaccessible to a woman whose 'Otherness' has conferred on her an exceptional character and determination.

To assess the extent to which Katrina's activities exceed the boundaries of the conventionally feminine, it is useful to analyse the roles in the novel of three Englishwomen who represent what Katrina initially strives to attain. Howarth establishes these three women as foils for Katrina and implies that they embody, collectively, the Victorian ideal of femininity. To simplify, this ideal nominated the private sphere as the 'proper' environment for the feminine. It decreed that the whole concern of 'feminine' women should be with tending to the spiritual and moral well-being of the family group. In her Discourses of Difference, Mills describes this ideal of femininity:

> The discourses of femininity designated certain areas of experience as 'feminine' and often attempted to elide these with 'female'. In western culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, certain character traits such as sympathy and interest in emotions and relationships were designated as feminine and classified as 'natural' for women. Denied the outlet of waged work, middle-class women were encouraged to care for others and consider the maintenance of relationships as their domain (Mills, 96).

Physical weakness and a tendency to succumb to various debilitating illnesses were also deemed feminine 'traits', and emphasised the unfitness of women for any role other than the traditionally feminine. Women's minds were believed to be weaker than men's, and their grasp on reason easily be overset by

strain. As Showalter suggests, it was thought that women expended so much vital energy on menstruation and childbirth that there was little left to spare for other functions. Any undue mental taxation could cause them to degenerate into physical or mental affliction (Showalter 1985, 125). That Howarth was influenced by these stereotypes is evident in her characterisation of the three Englishwomen. It is only in her depiction of the female 'Other' that she flouts convention.

The first of the three women with whom Katrina may be compared appears at the beginning of the novel when she is already in the last throes of small-pox. The reader encounters her when she is in a coma, and she does not regain consciousness before dying. Her function in the novel is to occupy the tragic role of the beautiful, moribund young woman who slips quietly into death. Naturally, the disease has not ravaged the beauty of her face, and there is even a suggestion that it is her own weakness, rather than the infection, which is killing her: 'She was not badly disfigured, and did not appear to have had the disease in a severe form; she was dying of exhaustion' (KTK 19).

The description of her eventual death suggests that her hold on life was so tenuous that her passing is little more than a short step: 'The young life, into the last three years of which so much trouble and heartache, so many wanderings, so much privation had been crowded, slipped quietly, almost imperceptibly, away' (KTK 25).

This image of impotent, helpless femininity is reproduced in the character of Allan's mother, Mrs Stanton:

> Kingdon was much surprised when he saw Mrs Stanton. He had imagined that a farmer's wife must be a strong, active-looking woman, perhaps rather stout, and a little bit homely in appearance. Mrs Stanton was the reverse of all this. She was tall and remarkably graceful, with an air of peculiar refinement. Her lustrous yellow hair was wound in

> thick coils round her shapely, erect head; her eyes were very blue, and her features regular, but her face was thin and bore lines of suffering (KTK 36).

Mrs Stanton is prone not only to vapourish ill health, but also to severe errors of judgment and weakness of resolution. She has an irrational affection for her younger son, Charlie, that amounts to an infatuation. By the time her sons are adults, she is so ill as to be perpetually in mortal danger. The origin of her malady lies in the weakness of her nerves. She is the epitome of what Showalter calls the hyperfeminine, neurasthenic Victorian woman who is too delicate for the common world (Showalter 1985, 140). As her weakness increases, her mind becomes disordered and her infatuation for her younger son grows into an obsession:

> Mrs Stanton's alarming attack proved to be the beginning of a long and serious illness. It was, in fact, a complete breakdown [...] At times her mind wandered, from sheer weakness and exhaustion; and it was one night, when Allan was sitting up with her alone, that he first realized, from her rambling talk, how her love and care for her younger son overmastered in the end every other feeling (KTK 103).

Both the small-pox sufferer and Mrs Stanton are obvious foils for the initiative, common-sense, and physical vigour of Katrina; but her most significant foil in the novel is her husband's former sweetheart, Rachel.

Howarth frequently juxtaposes and compares these two women, and they are conscious of feelings of envy for each other. Katrina, in particular, sees Rachel as 'a compendium of all womanly graces, and whom, although she had never seen her, she heartily disliked, or fancied that she did' (KTK 193).

A remark made by Allan Stanton establishes Rachel as a paragon of Victorian womanhood: ' "What an angel in the house you are,

Rachel," said Allan, holding both her hands, and looking fondly into her face. "What should we do without you?" ' (KTK 102). The phrase, 'angel in the house' epitomised the Victorian ideal of femininity[6]. Not only does it imply that a woman's proper sphere is that of the domestic, but it romanticises women as celestial beings, completely given over to the service of others. Whereas Howarth restricts Rachel to this conventional ideal, Katrina's abilities know no boundaries.

The most obvious and superficial difference between Katrina and Rachel lies in their physical appearances. Both are attractive young women, but they are of different physical types. Howarth depicts Rachel as frail and delicate, while Katrina belongs to the same 'breed' as the strapping, vigorous Dutchwomen mentioned earlier. Katrina, it is frequently emphasised, is not pretty but 'handsome' (KTK 108, 208 & 209).

Katrina's 'handsomeness' implies greater stature than Rachel's 'prettiness'. This stature is derived from her 'Otherness'. Howarth attributes her physical vigour to her Dutch inheritance, and her moral stability to her childhood exemption from the influences of Western culture. Katrina has grown to adulthood without the 'advantage' of genteel circumstances. Her childhood was untrammelled by the conventions and prohibitions that shaped the upbringing of middle-class English girls such as Rachel.

Katrina not only replaces Rachel in Allan's affections, but becomes her superior in every way. This is evident in the relationship that finally develops between the two women. By the end of the novel, Howarth shows that Katrina is clearly in a position of ascendancy over Rachel:

> Katrina looked down at her and smiled. Rachel was quite a head shorter than she was, and very slender and youthful

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[6] The phrase 'angel in the house' was coined by the Victorian author and poet, Coventry Patmore, who wrote a poetic treatise by that name in celebration of married love (1855-1856). Auerbach argues that Patmore's title became 'a convenient shorthand for the selfless paragon all women were exhorted to be, enveloped in family life and seeking no identity beyond the roles of daughter, wife, and mother' (Auerbach, 67-68).

> looking. She was really three or four years younger than Katrina, and Katrina felt a sort of protective, elder-sisterly affection for her, especially strong at this moment, when Rachel was left a second time motherless (KTK 293).

It should not be supposed that Howarth uses the character of Katrina as a critique of the feminine ideal per se. Her descriptions of conventional femininity are neither explicitly nor implicitly critical, and the effect is not to subvert the ideal. She merely presents in an admiring light one singular instance of a woman who rises above convention. Katrina's physical largeness and unusual intellectual abilities enable her to achieve this escape from convention. She possesses none of the weaknesses traditionally associated with femininity, but is completely self-reliant.

Katrina's heroic stature in the novel cannot be equated with that of the Victorian heroine of popular romantic fiction. She does not depend for her identity as a heroine on helplessness or inactivity, but rather on the employment of her wits, initiative, and indomitable will in the service of her own ends. For these reasons, it may be argued that Katrina has an 'honourary masculinity' conferred on her in the novel. Her encroachment upon the sphere of the masculine is successful by Victorian standards in that it does not in any way impair her femininity.

The mills of femininity through which Rachel and every other girl like her are processed, have a trivialising and belittling effect on them. Katrina's freedom from this process enables her to rise above the passivity of the consummately feminine and to achieve genuine 'hero'-ic stature.

Katrina's heroic stature is derived directly from her 'Otherness' which is derived in turn from her Dutch origin. This fact suggests that Howarth is straying from conventional English imperialist beliefs, whereby the Dutch could only be regarded as

the enemy. The Dutch were agreed to constitute a threat to English political supremacy and, as has been shown, were constantly belittled by English writers. Howarth's defection from this orthodoxy is minor in that it applies only to a single character and does not detract from her negative portrayal of the Dutch in general.

3.3 The female 'Other' in the work of Harriet Ward

3.3.1 Kaffir women

Harriet Ward constructs the female 'Other' in an entirely different light from the male 'Other'. At several points in Five Years in Kaffirland and Jasper Lyle she implicitly exempts the female members of a particular 'race' from the opprobrious characteristics she ascribes to that 'race' as a whole. She achieves this by breaking the conventions of the 'Othering' process, as identified by Pratt:

> The people to be othered are homogenised into a collective "they" which is distilled even further into an iconic "he" (the standardised adult male specimen) (Pratt 1985, 120).

According to this convention, the pronouns 'he' and 'they' are applied genericly to refer to all members of a particular 'race'. Ward frequently employs these pronouns to denote only the men of a 'race', and suggests that the women are somehow different.

With regard to the Kaffirs, she remarks: 'Nothing can be a greater proof of their savage state than their treatment of their women' (FYK i 179). She then proceeds to detail particular instances of cruelty against women that she has witnessed or heard of. This implies that the savage impulses which cause male Kaffirs to mistreat women are absent in the women themselves. The women are merely the victims of an 'innate' cruelty that is an invariable trait of the men of their 'race'.

Another instance in which women are explicitly exempted from the pronouns 'he' and 'they', occurs in Ward's description of the distribution of labour among the Kaffirs. She frequently states that 'they' are incorrigibly lazy, having no notion of the value of labour for its own sake, and that 'he' likes nothing better than to lead a life of complete idleness. To illustrate this point, she says, 'The women, poor creatures, tilled the ground, carried water, cut wood, ground the corn, - in short, did all the heavy work' (FYK ii 217). This description constructs Kaffir women as the embodiment of virtuous rural industriousness, in contrast to their 'slothful' menfolk.

A further aspect in which Kaffir women are depicted as different to Kaffir men is their attitude to war. Whereas the men are portrayed as compulsive war-mongers who continually attempt to force a conflict onto the settlers in the Colony, the women are constructed as the passive victims of a war which they desire to end. In Five Years in Kaffirland, Sutu, the mother of the chief Sandilla (Sandile), is shown to make several attempts at interceding between her son and the British authorities (FYK ii 97). She disapproves of his aggressive tactics and attempts to dissuade him from continuing the war against the Colony. As the war wears on, Ward shows that the Kaffir women in general begin actively to oppose it:

> We were not sorry to hear that the women of Kaffirland began to dread an invasion of their kraals, and threatened to strike work. They were tired of the war, they said. Although they have no voice, their assistance in the Ordnance and Commissariat departments is invaluable. Poor wretches! no wonder they dread another year of privation and toil (FYK ii 262).

It is typical of Ward's attitude to the female 'Other', that she can make the imaginative leap necessary to empathise with the Kaffir women - 'poor wretches!' She speculates about what they may be thinking and feeling, and expresses pity for their plight.

For the Kaffir men, she has nothing but unremitting condemnation.

The two characters who best embody Ward's attitude to the female 'Other' are Amakeya in Five Years in Kaffirland, and Amayeka in Jasper Lyle. Amakeya is supposedly based on a real Xhosa woman - the eldest daughter of the Jingqi chief Macomo (Maqoma) who lived for a time in the camp at Fort Hare during the War of the Axe.[7] Amayeka is a fictional construct undoubtedly inspired by Amakeya. Both are beautiful young women with a sense of loyalty and duty for which Ward duly honours them. In describing them, she creates a vision of a universal sisterhood of women which reaches across the boundaries of race and class.

If the essence of successful 'Othering' is to emphasise the difference between 'Self' and 'Other', then Ward's portrayal of Kaffir women fails to present them as truly 'Other'. She continually draws parallels between the behaviour of these women (often represented by either Amakeya or Amayeka) and that of Englishwomen. She emphasises the similarities between women everywhere and draws attention away from their differences. In the case of the male 'Other', her agenda is clearly to highlight or to manufacture difference.

It affords Ward benign amusement to comment on the links that bind high-ranking Englishwomen to 'simple' Xhosa maidens. Her intention in drawing these parallels is mildly satiric, but the English ladies and the Xhosa maidens are equally the targets of her satire. The feminine 'characteristics' that are presented by Ward as universal include caprice, a love of personal adornment, and incorrigible flirtatiousness. Amakeya, for example, is described as follows:

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7 Ward describes Maqoma as an ineffectual, drunken chief who betrayed his own people by collaborating with the colonial forces. This remained the orthodox historical opinion of the chief for a century and a half. Timothy Stapleton's 1994 biography of Maqoma, Maqoma: Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance, presents the alternative view that Maqoma's supposed addiction to alcoholism has been greatly overstated. He also shows that the Jingqi chief was for many years a formidable factor in repelling the colonial advance into Xhosa territory. The period Ward discusses, however, was the most unfortunate chapter in his career. His drinking problem was at its worst and he was compelled to give up his historic grazing lands when the Stockenstrom Treaties were revoked. See Stapleton's chapter entitled 'War does not make us rich: Maqoma's Decline (1836-47)' for an account of Maqoma's misfortunes during this time.

> Macomo's eldest daughter is the belle of the camp; she is one of nature's coquettes, and attitudinizes, exhibits her teeth, affects bashfulness, or mirth, as suits the taste of her admirers, and is as great an adept in the art of mute flirtation as any beauty at Almack's or Ascot (FYK ii 106).

Amakeya's admirers are not men of her own 'race', but the British soldiers in the camp. Ward does not condemn them for being attracted to a Kaffir woman, but presents their attraction as the natural consequence of her many physical charms.

The following passage also occurs in Five Years in Kaffirland and draws attention to the changeability of the 'feminine mind' and its infatuation with fashion:

> They [Kaffir women] carry their love of ornament to such an extent that they have certain fancies relative to their beads, which have as much sway over the fancies of the sable belles of Kaffirland, as any fiat, or caprice, from the divan of a Parisian modiste, or the penetralia of a Mayfair beauty. One year, the leathern boddice of a Tambookie bride is *parsemented* with beads of a dead white; another season, the T'Slambie girls will quarrel for a monopoly of bright blue, and the Gaikas set up an opposition in necklaces of mock garnet and amber (FYK ii 196-197).

Ward's references to 'Almack's' and 'Ascot' in the previous passage, and 'Paris' and 'Mayfair' in the above passage, constitute a form of social shorthand to signify the most privileged and exclusive strata of English society. Her intention is to satirise feminine caprice by presenting it as a universal phenomenon and an invariable female trait. This technique also has the effect of linking all womankind together in a form of gender-based 'fellowship'.

The character Amakeya appears again in Five Years in Kaffirland

when the British authorities are planning to allot a limited portion of land to her father, away from his hereditary territories. Maqoma begs to be allowed to remain on his land. When his requests fail, his daughter intercedes on his behalf:

> As a last trial, his daughter, Amakeya, the beauty of Kaffirland, made her way to the tent of Colonel Campbell, 91st Regiment, who, totally unprepared for her appearance, was yet more astonished at the sacrifice she offered, if her father's sentence of banishment might be rescinded.
>
> I have elsewhere mentioned Amakeya as the belle of the camp at Fort Hare, and no doubt she had been sufficiently reminded of her charms to make her sensible of the value of them. She made her strange offer in all the consciousness and pride of beauty; and, with her finely-moulded arms folded before her, she spoke without hesitation, for she was guided by motives worthy a lofty cause - motives, how desecrated! how degraded! Poor Amakeya!
>
> 'If her father might remain on his own lands,' she said, 'she would be the sacrifice and guarantee for his future good faith towards the white man. She would leave her own people, and follow Colonel Campbell; his home should be hers; she would forsake all, and dwell with him. This was her last word, her final decision, and she would abide by it' (FYK ii 278-279).

To emphasise the extent of the sacrifice that Amakeya is prepared to make, Ward adds that, 'the young girls of Kaffirland are brought up with strict notions of female propriety; to forfeit their reputation, is to entail on themselves severe punishment, and on their families perpetual disgrace' (FYK ii 279-280). Ward dwells with admiration on the spectacle of the young woman preparing to sacrifice her honour on the altar of filial duty. She focuses on her 'pride', her 'beauty' and her 'finely-moulded arms'. Although Amakeya's motives are described as 'desecrated' and 'degraded', inasmuch as they contradict colonial orders, they are nevertheless 'worthy of a lofty cause'.

Amakeya's offer is rejected by the colonel, and she departs with her father on his journey to his new location; but Ward continues to dwell on the offer that has been made and to speculate on Amakeya's probable feelings. Once again, she exhibits a capacity to enter empathetically into the emotions and motivations of a Kaffir woman:

> We may fancy Amakeya taking a last look at the green places wherein her childhood had been passed, and finally sitting down among a strange people, in sight of the 'great waters'. A new and wondrous spectacle to that mountain-girl must have been that mighty and pathless sea (FYK ii 280).

Ward's fascination with Amakeya led her to rework her as a fictional character in Jasper Lyle. She renames her character 'Amayeka' and removes her from the context of the Seventh Frontier War. Ward attributes Amayeka's exceptional nature and appearance to the influence of white blood in her veins:[8]

> Through her veins ran the blood of white forefathers; her ancestress was one of those unfortunates who had been stranded at the Umbeesam River when the Grosvenor was wrecked. To her lineage Amayeka owed her soft, though short, and wavy hair, her complexion of fairer hue than is usual among the Amakosa race, her delicately-chiselled outline of feature, and her falling shoulders. Her limbs I have described as exquisitely moulded, and the voice musically sweet (JL 193).

The perception of miscegenation expressed here is highly idiosyncratic for the nineteenth century. It has already been shown that orthodox colonial opinion believed the mingling of white and black bloods to produce something even 'worse' than

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8 Ward's interpretation of the consequences of miscegenation is very different to that of Anna Howarth. According to Howarth, a child of miscegenation can only be a base and unpredictably evil creature (Jan: An Afrikander). For Ward, the mixture of Kaffir and English bloods may produce a person of exceptional qualities, such as Amayeka.

black blood on its own. Unusually, Ward presents white blood as having an ameliorating influence over black blood. Although Amayeka's habits 'were those of the wild tribe to which she belonged' (JL 193), she has inherited such attributes from her white ancestor as tender-heartedness and gratitude; the latter, according to Ward, being unknown among the Kaffirs.

Amayeka is introduced to the reader in the following passage which presents Kaffir women in a somewhat paradoxical light:

> I know not a more perfect model of obedience and endurance than a Kafir woman. With the white man, she is never thoroughly tamed. You may take her under your care in childhood - you may accustom her to English habits, dress, and religion; but once let her taste her freedom, and she is like a bird on the wing again. True, however, to the instincts of her nature, she bows to the thraldom of her race, wields the pickaxe and the hoe, submits cheerfully to her occupation of 'hewer of wood and drawer of water,' yields obedience to her task-masters, abjures her European costume, albeit she delights in a broidery of many-coloured beads, and sits meekly silent when bartered for by a lover, who, as a husband, makes her one of many slaves. Such was Amayeka (JL 84-85).

It is not clear whether Ward most admires the uncomplaining industriousness of the Kaffir woman when she is among her own people, or the inherent wildness that prevents her from ever submitting fully to the domination of the white man. In a 1993 conference paper dealing with Ward's writings, Valerie Letcher has argued that there is a strong suggestion of approbation and envy in Ward's description of the Kaffir woman as 'a bird on the wing':

> This looks at first glance like stereotypical "othering", with the subject seen as a wild untameable creature; a careful reading, however, focuses on "tastes her freedom"

> and "like a bird on the wing again", and one senses a kind of envy in the narrator for such a freedom. Perhaps Ward is drawing silent comparisons between the lives of Xhosa and of English women. The depicted wildness seems entirely desirable (Letcher, 314).

The simile of a 'bird on the wing' is an image of liberation and potential escape from drudgery. To a Victorian woman for whom domestic duty was necessarily an intensely binding and restrictive force, the apparent untamability of the Kaffir woman's spirit must have been attractive.

A further indication of the 'wildness' of Amayeka's soul is the little meerkat which is her pet and constant attendant. The meerkat follows her everywhere, so that her silhouette is recognisable at night only by the shadow of the animal following her as she walks. Throughout the narrative, Amayeka is associated with her wild pet. They are presented as kindred spirits. The relationship, which is like that between a witch and her familiar, confers a feral quality upon Amayeka, and strengthens the impression, initially suggested by the 'bird on the wing' image, that she is a creature of nature.

The 'innate wildness' of Kaffir women is represented to the reader in the form of metaphors derived from classical mythology. These are applied collectively to groups of young Kaffir women, rather than to particular characters. Almost invariably, Ward refers to such groups as 'nymphs' or 'Naiads' or 'Nereides'. She depicts them as blithe spirits of nature. This is the reverse-side of the brute/demon metaphor that she employs for the male 'Other'. These different modes of physical description illustrate most clearly the contrast between Ward's constructions of the male and the female 'Other'. Both are portrayed as belonging partly to the natural and partly to the spirit world, but whereas this is a malevolent attribute in the male 'Other', it becomes benign and attractive in the female 'Other'.

Ward's young Kaffir women are almost always depicted in an idyllic sylvan environment. In accordance with the nymph-metaphor, they are frequently engaged in some form of aquatic activity. Under the aegis of Ward's female 'Other', Kaffirland is transformed from a darkly threatening landscape, inhabited by fiends and dervishes,[9] to an Edenic idyll as described in the following passage:

> The heavens are veiled with a mantle of pale grey; the stream begins to murmur, responsive to the breeze that stirs its waters; the birds congregate in the balmy air before seeking their rest; the countless herds move slowly homeward, panting for the refreshment of cool water brooks; and the women, some singly, some in parties in single file, trip across the plains to draw water, as is their custom at eventide. The picture reminds one of what one reads of in the patriarchal days (JL 190-191).

This pastoral paradise is a fitting setting for the nymph-creatures who inhabit it:

> Peals of laughter stirred the air. Beneath the over-arching boughs a crowd of dusky Nereides were taking their evening bath, swimming, diving, pulling each other in sport below the surface of the stream, swinging from branch to branch with amazing activity and grace, and tossing up fountains of spray on the elder women, who stood silently filling their calabashes at the clear pools between the stones at the drift (JL 191).

Elsewhere in Ward's writings, groups of Kaffir women are described as, 'nymphs in the river' (JL 192), and 'a bevy of sable Naiads' (FYK II 302). Their way of life is evocative of

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9 Ward usually represents the landscape of Kaffirland as having assumed the demonic aspect of the 'dark' foe that it shelters, as in this example:

> You look down on a bush so dense that hundreds of savages might be concealed there; and, on the opposite side, tremendous mountains, fit haunts for the savage, or the wild beast, slope down, overshadowing the valley with awful gloom (FYK i 244).

a simpler, prelapsarian age:

> They were very merry; they laughed, they sang, sometimes hymns, taught them by Amayeka; they danced, ate their frugal meals, and slept soundly, pillowed on flowery turf, with heaven's own canopy of blue and gold above them (JL 85).

The guileless, blameless existence of these Kaffir women is as different from that of the men of their 'race' as day is from night.

It has already been argued that Ward's demonisation of the male 'Other' is a manifestation of the storyteller's obligation to sensationalise her subject matter. Her mystification of the female 'Other' may similarly be attributed to the popular expectation that the storyteller's tale will be exotic and romantic. The storyteller who returned from Africa in particular was expected to tell a tale of wonder. For this reason, the Kaffirland of the female 'Other' becomes a fairytale world of eternally lovely girls, eternally young and living in idyllic harmony with nature.

The conclusion of Amayeka's story in Jasper Lyle strikes a strangely discordant note in the text. Earlier in the novel, she befriends a shipwrecked young Englishman named Martin Gray. They fall in love and decide to marry. Marriage to a white man has the effect of quenching her spirit permanently and reducing her to humble obedience. This state of subjugation appears to contradict Ward's earlier assertion that no white man can ever tame a Kaffir woman. This apparent anomaly is accounted for in advance by Ward's statement, in the early stages of Gray's courtship of Amayeka that, 'now, kindred, tribe, allegiance, all were forgotten in her passion for her white lover' (JL 194). The power of romantic love subdues her where mere white authority cannot.

There is a certain amount of pathos in the glimpses Ward gives us of Amayeka's married life. There is also a suggestion that Ward herself is reluctant to give up the image of her Kaffir heroine as a free, indomitable spirit:

> Next day a group entered the chapel of the mission station; it was said there was to be a wedding - a strange wedding; the young English teacher was to be married to a Kafir girl - it was quite true. At first the settlers in the neighbourhood turned away their heads when the young teacher and his dusky wife passed them by; but Amayeka was so humble, so industrious, so neat, what could be said against her? ... Gray and Amayeka - we never *can* call her Mrs Gray - were left in charge of school and pupils, and did their duty well in the good teacher's absence (JL 426-427 & 430; emphasis added).

Ward's reluctance to refer to Amayeka as Mrs Gray could be interpreted as a racist reluctance to afford a Kaffir woman the title of an Englishwoman, but in the light of the attitude she displays to Amayeka elsewhere in the novel, it is more likely a reluctance to acknowledge Amayeka's new abject identity. The Kaffir woman's humble 'Mrs Gray' persona is far less appealing to Ward than her untamed 'Amayeka' persona.

This is one of the few examples in Ward's writing of a conflict between her personal sentiments and the imperial ideal. One of the foremost principles of the colonial endeavour at the Cape was to render the colonised races humble and industrious in order to employ them as servants and labourers. Ward is an enthusiastic advocate of this role for the male 'Other', but displays a sentimental resistance to it for the female 'Other'. She has little desire to see her free-spirited nymphs living under the subjection of the white man. This could be a symptom of what Letcher, as mentioned above, has identified as Ward's unconscious envy of the comparative freedom of Kaffir women from western-style domestic duty. On the other hand, it may simply be that

the prospect of imperial domination blurs her image of Kaffir women as carefree nymphs frolicking in their sylvan setting. To transplant them to a scene of domestic servitude is too incongruous for Ward to contemplate.

3.3.2 An Afrikander woman

Like Anna Howarth, Ward invests an individual Dutchwoman with exceptional strength and stature. This is the Boer rebel, Madame Vander Roey, in Jasper Lyle. Madame Vander Roey is constructed as 'Other' in the text, and derives her stature as a heroine from her 'Otherness'. She has a resilience in the face of adversity that is lacking in the Englishwomen of the novel.

This remarkable character plays only a minor role in the novel, but attains an iconic status that is conferred on no other character. She is the wife of one of the Boer rebels in the Colony and has 'a slight touch of dark blood in her veins' (JL 298-299). During her husband's frequent absences, she takes control of the illicit Boer encampment in the hills of Kaffirland where she and her husband live. She rules the men under her command with harsh authority. To the circumstance of her mixed blood she owes:

> [H]er raven hair, drawn back from the temples, and bound round her head in classic fashion. The forehead was low, but well formed; the eyes long, dark, and fringed with black lashes, that softened their fiery expression; the nose aquiline, with the delicate nostril indicative of Indian blood (JL 299).

The volatility of Madame Vander Roey's mixed blood seems to speak through every feature of her physiognomy. Her appearance is an outward manifestation of the barbaric 'bloods' that flow within her veins. That she is very attractive is suggested by the classic arrangement of her hair, her 'well formed' forehead and

'delicate nostril'. But there is more than a hint of strangeness in the extreme blackness of her hair, her 'long' eyes with their 'fiery' expression and her 'aquiline nose'. At other points in the narrative, her eyes are described as 'fiery', 'flashing', and 'dark and brilliant' (JL 299 & 313). These descriptions hint at some inner mystical energy which shows itself through her eyes. It is fitting that the dwelling place of this witch-like woman is a bushman's cave in the side of a hill, rather than a prosaic man-made dwelling.

The menacing potential in Madame Vander Roey's mixed blood is never developed into a full-blown evil - unlike Anna Howarth's Jan Vermaak - but serves to remind the reader that the 'dark influences' in her veins render her dangerous. The fact that she single-handedly commands a rebel boer army instead of fulfilling the role of a typical Dutch housewife, suggests that her formidable appearance is not misleading.

When the rebel Boers engage a British commando in a skirmish, Madame Vander Roey's implied supernatural qualities become explicit:

> Amid the din, the smoke, the groans of dying men and horses - a strange adjunct in that picture of strife and agony - was the figure of the rebel's wife; her long skirt falling far below her feet over the rocks, giving her the appearance of supernatural height, her head uncovered, and all her sable tresses streaming in the wind. Many a stout heart quailed at first view of this singular apparition, as the sun, opening his crimson chamber behind it, threw out the tall form in bold relief between the rocks and sky. On either side of her were crouched her impish pages, Lynx and Frolic, immovable and unappalled, as she was apparently (JL 359-360).

The spectacle of a group of 'stout-hearted' soldiers, Boer and British alike, shrinking in fear before the sudden appearance of

this majestic woman is evocative of an entire canon of avenging-goddess myths. The dramatic atmosphere of smoke and dying men is an appropriate context for her manifestation. With the setting sun behind her and her skirt falling below the rocks, the illusion is created of an immensely tall woman with flowing black hair rising from the mountain by some unnatural agency. The supernatural appearance of the scene is increased by the 'impish' presence of the two Bushman servants at her side.

In the next instant, Madame Vander Roey sinks back behind the rocks and the illusion is broken, but the memory of her iconic transfiguration remains.

The mystical transformation of this 'Afrikander' woman is made possible by her 'Otherness'. No Englishwoman in Ward's writings can aspire to such mythical stature. It is a status she reserves exclusively for the female 'Other'.

3.4

Without explicitly posing a critique of Victorian stereotypes of femininity, both Howarth and Ward present in a favourable or heroic light particular women who transcend these stereotypes. These women are invariably regarded as 'Other' by the English colonial community. Whereas Howarth selects a specific individual to represent her notion of female heroism, Ward endows a whole race of female 'Others' with noble qualities. However, even Ward concentrates on individual heroines whom she constructs as 'exceptional' representatives of their races - that is, Amakeya, Amayeka and Madame Vander Roey. In the case of the female 'Other', 'Otherness' is perceived as an elevating and ennobling energy. There is a vast difference between this and the two writers' conception of 'Otherness' in the male 'Other' as degrading, barbaric and devilish. These dichotomous perspectives may partly be attributed to the storyteller's

tendency to create a world of dramatic contrasts, in which good and evil appear in easily recognisable guises. In the case of both writers, their depictions of the female 'Other' entail a certain degree of compromise with orthodox imperialist convictions.

4 A 'NEW WOMAN' AT THE EASTERN CAPE

4.1 Overview

Beatrice Hicks came to South Africa in 1894, at a time when the New Woman movement was coming into prominence and notoriety in London. Throughout The Cape As I Found It, Hicks aligns herself with this movement, expressing a commitment to its ideals and an awareness of its issues. She assumes her readership to be similarly sympathetic to the New Woman cause.

Despite her avowed commitment to a 'new' womanhood, Hicks occasionally engages in the perpetuation of 'old' prejudices and stereotypes of women. This conflict emerges from the transitional condition of feminism at the turn of the century. As Sara Mills asserts, much of the travel writing by women of this period was produced within 'a clash between discourses of femininity and discourses of feminism' (Mills, 72). That is to say, Hicks is trapped between a powerful literary tradition of femininity which belittled women and a newly-emergent tradition of feminism which asserted them. She straddles the two traditions uneasily and demonstrates an inability to reconcile her championship of women's rights with an unconscious contempt for the abilities of ordinary women.

This ambivalence on Hicks's part is directly challenged by her encounter with the imperialist situation prevailing at the Eastern Cape. The colonial experience compels her to weigh her feminist ideals against the prosaic and intransigent realities of the lives of women at the Cape. She responds to this challenge with a pragmatic willingness to adapt her beliefs to her circumstances. Contrary to the arguments of Mills (1991) and Hamalian (1981) that colonial travel was liberating to women,[1]

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[1] Leo Hamalian argues that colonial travel represented a form of liberation for Victorian women:

> For most women, immobilized as they were by the iron hoops of convention, the term "abroad" had a dreamlike, talismanic quality. It conjured up a vision composed