RESPONSES TO IMPERIALISM OF FOUR WOMEN WRITERS AT THE CAPE EASTERN FRONTIER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation undertakes a new historicist analysis of the writings of four Englishwomen who visited the Cape Eastern Frontier between the years 1846 and 1897. It attempts to show that, contrary to some recent feminist critical theory, women writers were not debarred by their gender from adopting the attitudes and discourses of imperialism. Furthermore, they cannot be assumed to have written from a feminist or proto-feminist perspective. The four women dealt with in this study demonstrate widely differing levels of commitment to the imperial endeavour. This is the consequence of various cultural, historical and personal factors. Although the influence of gender may be discerned in some aspects of their work, it is not the only, or even the primary, element in the construction of the texts. The dissertation argues that there is considerable resistance in the six texts to an attempt to disassociate them from imperialism.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

F Fourie

Fiona Hilary Fourie

25th day of August, 1995.

To my family and Frank
with love and gratitude

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List of abbreviations

CFI	The Cape As I Found It
FYK	Five Years in Kaffirland
FFT	Friends and Foes in the Transkei
JA	Jan: An Afrikander
JL	Jasper Lyle: A Tale of Kafirland
KTK	Katrina: A Tale of the Karroo

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1

The aim of this dissertation is to show that women colonial writers were not inhibited by their gender from adopting the discourses of imperialism. Furthermore, they cannot be assumed to have written from a feminist or proto-feminist perspective. The influence of gender may be discerned in certain aspects of their writing, but it is not, as some current feminist criticism has suggested, the primary determining factor behind the construction of the texts.

The dissertation focuses on four women writers who visited the Eastern Cape in the nineteenth century and wrote in response to their encounters with the colonial environment. Their writing exemplifies the argument that women's perceptions of imperialism were not simply a function of gender but of various cultural, historical and personal influences. The dissertation examines the following six texts:

The Cape As I Found It by Beatrice Hicks
Five Years in Kaffirland by Harriet Ward
Friends and Foes in the Transkei by Helen Prichard
Jan: An Afrikander by Anna Howarth
Jasper Lyle: A Tale of Kafirland by Harriet Ward
Katrina: A Tale of the Karroo by Anna Howarth

1.2

Women's colonial writing has lately become an object of interest for feminist critics who have posed the question, in the words of Susan Blake, 'What difference does gender make?' to this writing (Blake, 19). The most prominent of these critics are Sara Mills, Dorothy Driver, Mary Louise Pratt and Susan Blake.

Each has concluded that women colonial writers were debarred by their gender from adopting the same imperialist attitudes as their male counterparts. A summary of their arguments follows.

1.2.1 In her 1990 study of women's travel writing, Sara Mills claims that the myths and mechanisms of imperialism were exclusively masculine, as a result of which a woman could never be an agent of empire in the same sense as a man. She argues that this prevented women writers from adopting, without reservation, the imperialist voice.[1] Mills also argues that women travellers travelled as a form of escape from the restrictions of their daily existences and that the experience of travel was liberating to them (Mills, 4).

1.2.2 In an article which examines the position of women in the colonial enterprise, Dorothy Driver argues that women colonial writers could not escape the stereotypes imposed on them by society. One of these was that women were more compassionate, sympathetic and understanding than men. According to Driver, women consequently tended to exercise a civilising or humanising effect on the colonial endeavour (Driver, 8). Driver also argues that women adopted the role of mediators between the races: 'As a general rule, we might say that in the British context women act as mediators between the classes, whereas in the colonial context they mediate between the races' (Driver, 12).

Mills's argument proceeds:

> [W]omen's writing and their involvement in colonialism was markedly different from men's; their work was informed by different discursive frameworks and pressures which I shall map out. Because of the way that discourses of femininity circulated within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women travel writers were unable to adopt the imperialist voice with the ease with which male writers did. The writing which they produced tended to be more tentative than male writing, less able to assert the 'truths' of British rule without qualification. Because of their oppressive socialisation and marginal position in relation to imperialism, despite their generally privileged class position, women writers tended to concentrate on descriptions of people as individuals rather than on statements about the race as a whole (Mills, 3).

1.2.3 Mary Louise Pratt claims that women's travel writing is characterised by the use of irony which undermines imperialist discourse. In her 1992 study of colonial travel writing, she also attempts to show that the conquering, appropriatory attitude of male writers to the colonial environment was not accessible to women writers.[2]

1.2.4 Susan Blake's 1992 article about the influence of gender in women's colonial writings argues that the 'feminine tendency' to perceive oneself through the eyes of others, enabled women colonial writers to achieve a reciprocal relationship with the colonised 'Other' based on mutual respect. She contrasts this with the masculine tendency to objectify the 'Other' (Blake 1992).

This dissertation argues that these claims emerge from a feminist desire to exonerate women writers from complicity in the imperial endeavour, rather than from a careful analysis of the texts themselves. These critics have assumed that contact with the imperialist context awoke feminist or proto-feminist sentiments in women travellers which caused them to disassociate themselves from, or even to oppose, the colonial enterprise. The dissertation undertakes a close analysis of the six texts with the aim of showing that women were indeed capable of espousing orthodox imperialist attitudes. It also argues that exposure to the imperial environment could have a moderating rather than a radicalizing effect on feminist ideals.

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2 See Pratt's section on 'The Lady in the Swamp' in Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation:

> It is hard to think of a trope more decisively gendered than the monarch-of-all-I-survey scene. Explorer-man paints/possesses newly unveiled landscape-woman. But of course there were explorer-women, like Alexandra Tinne and Mary Kingsley, who led expeditions in Africa, and explorer-wives like Florence Baker, who accompanied expeditions up the Nile [...] these women, in their writings, do not spend a lot of time on promontories. Nor are they entitled to. The masculine heroic discourse of discovery is not readily available to women, which may be one reason why there exists so very little European women's exploration writing at all (Pratt 1992, 213).

The last statement of this passage is based on a misconception. Sara Mills has shown that texts by European women travel writers are anything but scarce.

1.3

Of the six texts selected for study, three are novels (Jasper Lyle: A Tale of Kafirland, Jan: An Afrikander and Katrina: A Tale of the Karroo), and three are 'factual' accounts of their authors' visits to the Eastern Frontier (Five Years in Kaffirland, Friends and Foes in the Transkei and The Cape As I Found It). However, it is not a simple matter to draw such generic distinctions between them. Each text is strongly allogenetic in nature - that is, it refers to a 'reality', a set of circumstances that exists outside its textual borders. Malvern Van Wyk Smith has argued that this blurring of genres is characteristic of the colonial fiction that emerged from Africa in the nineteenth century (Smith 1990, 12). David Spurr has also made this claim for imperial literature, arguing that the degree of historical referentiality in a text does not assist in classifying it as either 'fictional' or 'factual'.[3]

Each of the six texts dealt with in this dissertation may be subsumed within the larger category which Walter Benjamin, in his 1970 study, Illuminations, has called the 'storyteller' genre of writing (Benjamin 1970). Benjamin identifies this genre as the fading relic of an obsolete Western oral tradition. He argues that, in the eighteenth century, the role of the traditional storyteller was largely replaced by that of the novelist, but that some traces of the storyteller's transference of 'communicable experience' remain in the work of modern writers (Benjamin, 84).

By Benjamin's definition, the storyteller is usually a traveller

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[3] In his study of imperial writing, The Rhetoric of Empire, Spurr argues in favour of abandoning the distinctions between fact and fiction:

> The study of discourse, however, explodes these categories of genre in the effort to seize hold of a more global system of representation. The question that matters for this study is, finally, not how one literary form differs from another, but how writing works, in whatever form, to produce knowledge about other cultures. That is why, at the risk of failing to show the proper respect for literary distinctions, I have freely drawn together examples from so many different kinds of text, treating them as moments in the productions of a larger discursive phenomenon (Spurr, 10-11).

With a similar disrespect for literary distinctions, I have included in a single study works which may loosely be termed 'factual' or 'fictional', assuming them to be moments in the production of the colonial 'storytelling' genre.

who has returned from a faraway place to relate his or her experiences to the home-bound community. In his words, '"When someone goes on a trip, he has something to tell about," goes the German saying, and people imagine the storyteller as someone who has come from afar' (Benjamin, 84). The storyteller is also one who has accumulated wisdom on his or her travels and has the authority to pronounce on the condition of the home-bound community. The true storyteller's tale is never without some form of advice, instruction, moral, maxim or lesson for the benefit of the reader-listener. The authority behind this didactic function lies, according to Benjamin, simply in the fact that the storyteller has travelled: 'The intelligence that came from afar - whether the spatial kind from foreign countries or the temporal kind of tradition - possessed an authority which gave it validity, even when it was not subject to verification' (Benjamin, 89).

Unlike the 'conventional' Victorian novelist, who assumes a fictional persona in order to narrate a story, the life of the storyteller is transparently visible at all times through the layers of the story. As Benjamin argues, 'traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel' (Benjamin, 91-92).

Despite Benjamin's contention that the storyteller belongs to the pre-industrial age of human history, it may be argued that the genre enjoyed a brief renaissance in the heyday of Victorian imperialist writing. The popularity of this writing with the metropolitan audience was largely dependent upon its remote and fabulous origins. The main claim of colonial authors to the attention of their readers was the whiff of the exotic that clung to their persons on their return from distant places. They used the traditional licence of the storyteller to tell a tall tale - to emphasise the dramatic side of colonial life over the commonplace.

Harriet Ward, Beatrice Hicks, Anna Howarth and Helen Prichard

share in the glamour of the returning storyteller. As women, they are invested with the additional mystique of having ventured into a continent that was generally agreed to be 'no place for a white woman', on account of the dangers it presented (Chaudhuri & Strobel, 3).

The six texts are narrated in the unstructured raconteur mode of the storyteller. The authors frequently interrupt their narratives to address remarks to the reader. The purpose of these interruptions is occasionally didactic - to point out the moral behind a particular incident; and frequently explanatory - to clarify some point in the story. The authorial persona is never absent from the reader's awareness for long. The effect of this style of narration is to invoke echoes of a long-defunct oral tradition. The reader receives the impression that the story is being told, rather than written, by an unhurried narrator who speaks from memory as the details of the story occur to her, and who has no compunction about interrupting her story or doubling back on herself in the course of the telling.

The texts are popular and unscholarly, with no claims to serious literary merit. As has been argued by Michael Rice, this renders them more representative of their time and place than strictly 'literary' works. Rice makes this point in his overview of Boer War fiction:

> It is assumed that popular literature no less than so-called serious fiction has a role to play in South African literature (as it does in other literatures) in the transmission of ideas, values and the modification of sensibilities. That is, ephemeral literature can be regarded as just as workable an index of what people were thinking and feeling, or supposed to be thinking and feeling at any given time as any more scrupulously "literary work". In fact, in many respects, current mores, values and ideology are often more easily identifiable in popular literature than in fiction that has pretensions to

serious consideration (Rice, 1).

Each of the six texts offers a valuable subjective perspective (or 'workable index' in Rice's words) of the social, political and literary situation of the nineteenth-century Eastern Cape.

1.4 The authors and their work

Each of the four writers dealt with in this study was born into the upper or upper-middle class of England. Upon their arrival at the Cape, they were absorbed into a similar, though less formal and rigid, class structure. Patricia Scott has identified the upper class at the Cape in the nineteenth century as consisting of army officers, merchants and 'gentlemen', with professionals included in the upper-middle class (Vernon, 19).

1.4.1 Harriet Ward lived on the Eastern Frontier from 1843 to 1848, a period spanning the War of the Axe (1846/47). Possibly the first woman war correspondent in the world,[4] she wrote articles about the war for the Cape Frontier Times and the United Services Magazine. Ward was the wife of a captain in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Sutton 1982). By the time she returned to England in 1848, Five Years in Kaffirland, a two-volume work based on her journal and articles, was ready for publication. Three years later she published a novel, Jasper Lyle: A Tale of Kaffirland, based on her experiences at the Cape and on the stories she had heard there.

1.4.2 Helen Prichard came to the Eastern Frontier in 1876. She accompanied her husband who was a civil engineer in the service of the British government. He had been assigned to build a bridge in the Transkei.

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[4] This claim was made for Ward by J. Keith Sutton, writing in the Eastern Province Herald in 1983 (E P Herald 1 March 1983).

Prichard's visit coincided with the Ninth Frontier War of 1877/78. Most of her sojourn on the Frontier was spent fleeing as a refugee from the scene of the conflict. This experience is recorded in Friends and Foes in the Transkei, published in 1880.

1.4.3 Anna Howarth came to the Eastern Cape in the early 1890s as a single woman, at the age of forty. Her father, with whom she had always lived, had recently died. He was the Rector of St George's Church in Hanover Square, London, and Chaplain to Queen Victoria (Cornwell, 121). Howarth came to South Africa as a nurse-aid assigned to the hospital in Grahamstown (Gutsche 1961). In 1898 and 1899 she published respectively Jan: An Afrikander and Katrina: A Tale of the Karroo. These novels are based on her own observations of colonial society and on the stories she heard from the settler community. Howarth returned to England in 1935.

1.4.4 Beatrice Hicks was educated at the North London Collegiate School. This suggests that she was born into a family of upper-middle class standing in England. However, she was compelled to earn her own living and was employed as a clerical worker in an office. In 1894, at the age of twenty two, she decided to emigrate to the Cape. For three years she held a number of posts in the Eastern Cape as a schoolteacher and a governess. In 1897, for reasons which seem to have involved some improvement in her financial position, she returned to England. The Cape As I Found It, published in 1900, describes her experiences in the Colony.

1.5 The historical context of the texts

The Cape Colony was an example of what Pratt calls a 'contact zone'.[5] It was the site of violent, conflict-ridden interaction between various political interest groups whose fortunes fluctuated wildly throughout the course of the century. Between 1846 and 1900 (during which the six texts were written) three bloody frontier wars took place in the Colony.[6] The imperial forces were triumphant at the conclusion of each war, but the history of the Frontier is by no means a simple catalogue of British successes.

By the 1840s, there were only three serious contenders for political and economic ascendancy at the Cape - the British, the Dutch settlers and the independent Xhosa nation. In retrospect, it is apparent that the Dutch and the Xhosa stood no real chance of success, but they were nevertheless feared by the British.

Other Frontier groups such as the so-called 'Hottentots', 'Bushmen' and 'Griquas' were vastly outnumbered in the region. Their political ambitions had been broken in the previous century by war and disease.[7]

After the British took the Cape by force of arms from the Dutch in 1806, there was little likelihood of the Boers wresting

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5 Pratt explains her use of the term in the following way:

> "Contact zone" in my discussion is often synonymous with "colonial frontier." But while the latter term is grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe), "contact zone" is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. By using the term "contact", I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. A "contact" perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travellers and "travelees," not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power (Pratt 1992, 6-7).

The literature that emerged from a bitterly contested contact zone such as the Eastern Frontier is one in which the presence of the 'Other' is continually foregrounded and a constant reevaluation of the 'Self' is in progress.

6 The wars occured as follows: Seventh Frontier War (War of the Axe) - 1846-1847
Eighth Frontier War - 1850-1852
Ninth Frontier War - 1877-1878

7 For a history of the decline and fall of these peoples, up to and including the disastrous Fifth Frontier War of 1799, see The Shaping of South African Society by R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (1979).

political supremacy from the English settlers; but the economic challenge they represented was resented. Kenneth Parker sums up Anglo-Dutch settler relations as follows:

> From the time of the British occupation until the middle of the nineteenth century both settler groups of Boer and Briton co-existed in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion of each other's political ambitions and cultural aspirations, although this conflict was superseded by the common cause of military subjugation and economic dispossession of the original inhabitants.
>
> With the discovery during the 1870s of the mineral wealth of the interior, and the subsequent rapid transformation of the subcontinent from an agrarian and feudal colony into an industrial mining and capitalist state, conflict between Boer and Briton increased both in degree of intensity and in scope, until these conflicts culminated in open war at the turn of the present century (Parker, 3).

After the mineral revolution, the real site of Boer-Briton conflict was located to the north of the Orange River, but ripples of tension were felt as far south as the Cape Colony. This tension is reflected in the negative portrayals of Dutch settlers that appear from time to time in the work of the four writers.

The real thorn in the side of the British colonists, however, was the independent Xhosa nation. By 1848, this nation had been forced across the Kei River and compelled to give up its historic grazing lands between the Kei and the Keiskamma. The British and the Kaffirs both conducted sporadic cross-border raids for cattle. The historian Julian Cobbing has shown in his article entitled 'Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on the Battles of Dithakong and Mbolompo' (1988) that the British raids were also partly, if not primarily, motivated by a desire to secure labourers for the settlers. At intervals, these border disputes flared up into

full-scale Frontier Wars.

The fifty four years over which the six texts were written represent a consolidation of British interests on the Eastern Frontier. The period encompasses numerous changes of a polictical, economic and social nature in the region. Simultaneously, in England, literary conventions were developing and changing, and various social trends, such as the New Woman movement, were on the rise. The Eastern Cape of the 1840s was a considerably different milieu to the Eastern Cape of the 1890s. As a matter of course, the four writers underwent very dissimilar experiences in the region and wrote about their travels in diverse ways. The dissertation acknowledges this diversity and attempts to assess its significance in the construction of the texts.

1.6 Methodology

My methodology combines the techniques of literary critical analysis with the new historicist method. The new historicism is a diffuse and non-prescriptive mode of literary analysis that has been adopted by critics of widely disparate ideological standpoints.

Certain common features can, however, be identified. The new historicism encourages an empirical and inductive approach to the text and requires the critic to put aside his or her premises when engaging with the text. It assumes the existence of a reciprocal relationship between text and context whereby the two are mutually dependent for their meanings. It does not assume a simple cause-and-effect model according to which the text is generated by its context.

While not rejecting the possibility that general trends and influences may be detected in literature, the new historicism requires the critic, in the words of David Simpson, 'to test them

out and revise them against locally objective items of information - dare I say facts' (Simpson, 744). Above all, the new historicism seeks to proliferate rather than expunge differences between texts.

Faced with the rigorous methods of an inductive and disinterested enquiry, Simpson argues, 'the megalith of a normative and all-governing historical paradigm vanishes at once' (Simpson, 744). Even the smaller prescriptive paradigms, such as the one that seeks to categorise women's colonial literature, disintegrate in the face of this mode of enquiry.

The new historicism assumes that it is possible for the critic to abandon his or her presentist ideological burden and to allow the text to generate its own meanings. As Gillian Beer argues:

> We shall read as readers in 1987 or 1988 or, with luck, 1998, but we need not do so helplessly, merely hauling, without noticing, our own cultural baggage. That is likely to happen if we read past texts solely for their grateful 'relevance' to our expectations and to those of our circumstances that we happen to have noticed. The encounter with the otherness of earlier literature can allow us also to recognise and challenge our own assumptions, and those of the society in which we live (Beer, 67).

This dissertation attempts to discard all premises except for the conviction that, in Beer's words, 'the text fights back' (Beer, 68) and that it must be permitted to do so with minimal resistance from the critic. While not denying the obvious and valuable insights that a twentieth-century 'hindsight-perspective' can bring to literature, the dissertation encourages the generation of contemporary meaning in the text.

1.6 Use of terminology

For the sake of convenience and accuracy, I employ contemporary terms to refer to the various groups of Frontier-dwellers who appear in the texts. Although appellations such as 'Kaffir' and 'Hottentot' have been abandoned in the latter half of the twentieth century, they were applied without pejorative intention in the nineteenth century.[8] Moreover, there are no satisfactory modern equivalents for these terms. For example, the word 'Kaffir' did not apply to all Xhosa-speakers on the Frontier, but only to members of the sovereign Xhosa-speaking nation that lived to the north of the Keiskamma River before 1848, and to the north of the Kei River thereafter. 'Kafir' was a common nineteenth-century spelling variation of this word. Prichard and Ward use this variation from time to time.

The word 'Fingo' was used to refer to the Xhosa-speaking, non-independent group of servants and labourers who lived within the Colony itself.[9] Occasionally, the four writers use the term 'Africans' to refer collectively to all the indigenous peoples living at the Cape. My adherence to this original terminology is intended to facilitate reference to the texts and to prevent confusion.

1.7 Summary of chapters

The four central chapters of the dissertation are arranged according to the traditional structure of the storyteller's tale. In the popular imagination, the storyteller is conceived of as one who returns from a faraway place to tell the community about the people he has seen (chapters two and three - 'The "Other" '

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8 In her Dictionary of South African English, Jean Branford cites 1973 as the date from which the word 'Kaffir' became an actionable term of abuse in South Africa (Branford, 126). Its obsolete nineteenth-century meaning is given as 'a member of the Xhosa, Pondo or Thembu nations' (Branford, 125). Branford gives 1966 as the date from which 'Hottentot' was abandoned by anthropologists in favour of 'Khoi Khoi'.

9 According to Alan Webster in his MA thesis, 'Land Expropriation and Labour Extraction Under Cape Colonial Rule: The War of 1835 and the "Emancipation" of the Fingo' (1991), twentieth-century white anthropologists coined the term 'Mfengu' as an Africanised version of 'Fingo'. Webster argues that the covert British aim in launching the Frontier War of 1835 was to secure thousands of labourers for the colonists. These labourers were drawn from a number of groups which had been dispersed by the conflict in the interior, and were dubbed 'Fingoes' by the colonists.

and 'The Female "Other" '), the places he has been (chapter five - 'Landscape'), and the lessons he has learnt about himself and his own community (chapter four - 'A New Woman at the Eastern Cape'). The chapters deal with themes rather than with specific texts or specific authors. Every author does not appear in every chapter, but has been included where her writing illuminates the particular point under discussion.

1.7.1 Chapter Two: The 'Other'

Chapter Two examines the construction of the colonised 'Other' in the work of Harriet Ward, Beatrice Hicks and Anna Howarth. It shows that the level of hostility contained in these depictions is directly related to the threat each Frontier group was believed to pose to the success of the imperial endeavour. There is an inclination to homogenise and dehumanise the frontier 'Other'. The tone of these depictions is stridently imperialistic and chauvinistic. There is no indication of a mediatory impulse or an ambivalent use of irony in the texts.

1.7.2 Chapter Three: The female 'Other'

Chapter Three argues that the portrayal of the female 'Other' in the work of Harriet Ward and Anna Howarth is far more sympathetic than that of the male 'Other'. My argument attributes this to the lack of physical threat that the female 'Other' posed to the writers personally and to the imperial endeavour in general. There is evidence in the texts of an attempt to perceive the female 'Other' in individual terms and a desire to achieve a reciprocal relationship with her, based on mutual understanding. Although male colonial writers also portray the female 'Other' with sympathy, their depictions are tinged with a voyeuristic impulse which is absent in the work of women

writers.

1.7.3 Chapter Four: A 'New Woman' at the Eastern Cape

Chapter Four argues that the experience of travel was not necessarily liberating to women. In the case of Beatrice Hicks, exposure to the imperial context has a moderating rather than a radicalizing effect on her feminist ideals. At the outset of the text, Hicks declares herself to be a New Woman and demonstrates a considerable awareness of feminist issues. Her encounter with the prosaic realities of the lives of women in the Eastern Cape, causes her to adapt and compromise her New Woman convictions.

1.7.4 Chapter Five: 'Landscape'

The word 'landscape' is applied broadly to refer to all aspects of the physical environment in which the writers found themselves. Chapter Five analyses the presentation of landscape in the writings of Helen Prichard, Harriet Ward and Beatrice Hicks. Prichard and Ward subject the Frontier landscape to the proprietorial 'gaze' of the imperialist, showing a desire to control and domesticate it. They construct the landscape in exaggerated terms as both a paradise and a hell. For Hicks, the landscape becomes a symbol of liberation for the individual - a site of freedom where women, in particular, can escape the duties of domesticity.

The dissertation concludes that women colonial writers were capable of espousing the colonial cause and adopting the discourses of imperialism. There are, however, considerable differences in the level of commitment to imperialism expressed by the four writers. These differences emerge from the individual nature of their encounters with the Eastern Cape and

cannot be categorised or ascribed to any particular ideology. Furthermore, the experience of colonial travel was not of itself liberating or consciousness-raising for women writers. While certain aspects of the texts are manifestations of the influence of gender, it is impossible and undesirable to establish general 'rules' for the functioning of this influence.

2 THE 'OTHER'

2.1 Overview

Feminist critics of women's colonial literature have proposed the theory that women writers were unable to reproduce imperialist attitudes to the colonial 'Other' because they were themselves marginalised from the myths and mechanisms of imperialism (Mills, 3). A corollary of this theory is that women writers achieved a reciprocal 'subject-subject' relationship with the 'Other' (Blake, 30) and that they functioned as mediators between the colonial races (Driver, 12). A close analysis of the writings of three colonial women - Harriet Ward, Beatrice Hicks and Anna Howarth - reveals the limitations of these theories.

The English colonists of the Eastern Cape regarded the various races of the frontier as fundamentally different to themselves. In their writings, they construct these people as 'Other' as opposed to the colonial 'Self'. The nature and violence of this 'Othering' process varies from author to author. It also varies according to the threat each frontier group was believed to pose to the success of the imperial endeavour.

The writers of the Eastern Frontier seldom portray the frontier 'Other' as a homogenous and indistinct mass. They are careful to distinguish between such groups as the Kaffirs, the Fingoes, the Bushmen and the Hottentots. In his 1975 study of portrayals of the savage in literature, Brian Street has argued that nineteenth-century colonial writers perceived the nations of the world as occupying different positions on a hierarchical 'Chain of Being', according to their relative racial superiority or inferiority (Street, 50-51). This model may be applied to the frontier situation. At the bottom of the frontier 'Chain of Being' were the Bushmen, followed in ascending order by the Hottentots, the Kaffirs, the Fingoes, the Dutch and the English.

The structure of this chapter imitates the hierarchy of the 'Chain of Being', with the intention of showing how the nature of the 'Othering' process varied from group to group. The last section of the chapter deals with miscegenation - a volatile and problematic concept for colonial writers, and one that could not be comfortably accommodated in the 'Chain of Being' model.

My analysis is partly informed by Abdul JanMohamed's theories concerning the literary construction of the colonial 'Other'. His identification of the colonial tendency to dehumanise the 'Other' and project onto it the colonists' 'own anxieties and negative self-images' is particularly useful (JanMohamed 1983, 3). However, I reject his employment of the so-called 'Manichean Allegory' to explain colonial relations. This model presents the colonial perception of 'Self' and 'Other' as consisting entirely of binary oppositions of good and evil (JanMohamed 1983, 4). This fails to convey the multiplicity of ways in which different frontier 'Others' were depicted by the writers of the Eastern Cape.

Also useful to a study of the literary 'Other' is the work of Sander Gilman, who has shown that the 'Self' will manufacture difference in its stereotyping of the 'Other,' where difference is not readily discernible (Gilman 1985b, 18). This is particularly evident in colonial representations of miscegenation. The object of the 'Othering' process may look, sound and behave just like the 'Self', but this does not encourage tolerance on the part of the 'Self'. On the contrary, it generates an exceptionally violent and hostile form of 'Othering', as is demonstrated in Anna Howarth's novel Jan: An Afrikander.

..2 Bushmen and Hottentots in the work of Harriet Ward

During the War of the Axe of 1846/47, the British forces were assisted by the Bushmen in the capacity of guides and trackers,

and by the Hottentots as allied soldiers. Harriet Ward makes frequent mention of these services and extends a measure of approval to the Bushmen and the Hottentots in consequence. This is one of many indications in her writing that the success of the imperial endeavour is profoundly important to her. Her depictions of the frontier 'Others' are directly influenced by whether or not they constituted an obstruction to the British colonial mission.

Ward uses the terms 'Bushman' and 'Hottentot' almost interchangeably, making little attempt to distinguish between the two. An exception to this is apparent in Jasper Lyle, where she says of the Bushman that 'his expression is less cunning than that of the Hottentot physiognomy' (JL 19). This attempt to construct a difference between the two groups based on levels of guile suggests that she perceives the Hottentot as more complex than the 'simple' Bushman. It also indicates that her attitude to the Bushman is slightly more benevolent than her attitude to the Hottentot.

Ward's tendency to sentimentalise the Bushman is apparent in her discussions about the dispossession of the Bushmen from their land:

> [W]e must remember that, notwithstanding the broad assertion of our mock philanthropists at home, that we are not justified in taking the land from the Kaffir, "the land of his father," the country is only his by might - no more his than ours, he having driven the aborigines from the dwelling-place God originally led them into. Where are these poor Bushmen, now? Far up the country, among the steep recesses of the mountains, where they form a link between the animals of the wilderness and human nature. Thither civilization may follow them when the land of their forefathers shall be under British rule (FYK ii 176).

Ward's use of the word 'poor' indicates a measure of sympathy for

the plight of the Bushmen. However, while she pities them for their misfortunes, she shows no inclination to take up their cause. She does not suggest that 'the dwelling-place God originally led them to' should be restored to them when it is in the hands of the British. The gift of civilisation is assumed to be ample recompense for the loss of their land.

By referring to the Bushmen as forming 'a link between the animals of the wilderness and human nature', Ward appears to be aligning herself with the nascent evolutionary theory of the mid-nineteenth century.[1] Although Darwin's The Origin of Species was only published in 1859, John Burrow claims that evolution - the theory that human beings had evolved from an animal-like condition - was '"in the air" in the twenty years or so before the publication of The Origin' (Burrow, 28).

It is not clear to what extent and in what form early evolutionary theory had been absorbed by the popular consciousness. According to Nancy Stepan, in her study of nineteenth-century anthropological attitudes, by the 1850s the shift to a conservative anthropological conception of race, according to which races were believed to form a natural but static chain of excellence, was quite far advanced in Britain (quoted in Brantlinger, 186). This theory was seized on by colonial writers like Ward to justify the imperial endeavour.[2]

In accordance with her familiarity with evolutionary theory, Ward constructs the Bushman as a beast-like, though harmless, creature. One of the minor characters in Jasper Lyle is a

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1 Beatrice Hicks, writing 53 years after Ward, also displays a familiarity with evolutionary theory in her characterisation of the Bushmen:

> Driven back by the tide of civilization, against which they could not stand, they have taken refuge in the desert, where, as of old, they can follow their primitive habits, snaring and hunting their game, and in default of this, grubbing in the ground for bulbs and roots, or feeding on locusts and ants' eggs. They, with their wrinkled faces, large bodies and spindle legs, are more like baboons than human beings, and stand to remind us of a time when man was nearer the animals than he is now (CFI 143).

2 This point has been made by Patrick Brantlinger in his study of the British Empire, Rule of Darkness: 'Evolutionary thought seems almost calculated to legitimize imperialism. The theory that man evolved through distinct social stages - from savagery to barbarism to civilization - led to a self-congratulatory anthropology that actively promoted the belief in the inferiority, indeed the bestiality, of the African (Brantlinger, 186).