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Empire, Nation, Gender and Romance:

The Novels of Cynthia Stockley (1872-1936) and Gertrude Page (1873-1922)

By

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ABSTRACT

As the first detailed study of the Southern Rhodesian romantic novels of Cynthia Stockley (Lilian Julia Webb) and Gertrude Page (Gertrude Dobbin), this dissertation presents biographical information about the two writers as well as an analysis of the historical reception and discursive context of the novels – focusing primarily on the novels as rewritings of the gendered discourses of the British “New Imperialism” and of a nascent Rhodesian nationalism. Their novels reveal ambivalences about and conflicts between feminism and maternalism, heroic and bourgeois versions of the romance genre, and bourgeois imperialism and the representation of feminine sexuality.

The introduction synthesises available information and some archival materials into biographical sketches of Page and Stockley, and considers their lives, major themes in their novels, and the popular and literary reception of their work in relation to the history of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia between 1870 and 1936.

In chapter 1, the generic context of the novels is outlined, the bourgeois and the heroic romance tradition are related to two different variants of colonial discourse, and the impact on Page’s and Stockley’s work of contemporary metropolitan trends in women’s popular fiction such as the novel of sensation, the “new woman” novel, and the “new girl” fiction is considered.

In chapter 2, which focuses on the conflicts within the romances between colonial settlement and feminine individuation, I delineate the triangle of contradictory identifications (heroic imperial masculinity, a settled, domestic femininity, and a transgressive, improper “African” force of feminine sexuality), within which Page and Stockley situate their heroines. While Page is able to settle her

heroines within a redefined bourgeois domestic sphere, Stockley's ambivalences about domesticity are less easily managed.

In chapter 3, I present the struggle between heroic and bourgeois definitions of masculine power, freedom, and duty in the romances and their discursive contexts, in relation to the changing economic and administrative character of Southern Rhodesia after 1897, and show that these struggles over the meaning of masculinity had crucial implications for the definition of a Rhodesian identity.

Chapter 4 provides a theoretical and historical framework for understanding the contradictions of identification that beset a settler nationalism. Here I illustrate that the difficulties of imagining an extended imperial community repeat on a larger scale the contradictions involved in imagining the smaller, national community, since the racial, class-based and gendered contests over bourgeois identity provide the basis for imagining both nationalism and imperialism. This chapter delineates the gendered discourses central to the construction of both a "properly" bourgeois imperial identity and its heroic variants, and also provides an analysis of the historical production of discourse about British women in the course of the colonisation of Rhodesia.

In chapter 5, I outline the differing Rhodesian identities imagined by Page and Stockley respectively, in terms of their different choices of the definitional "others" and founding archetypes which asserted their notions of a new Rhodesian identity. I also show the marked historical shifts which take place in the patriotic visions of both writers.

In chapter 6, Stockley's and Page's re-interpretations of conventional patriotic discourses about British women are considered in relation to Foucault's notion of "hysterization". While both authors redefine domestic femininity to incorporate certain aspects of the "improper feminine", Page's redefinitions attempt to extend the

domestic “virtues” of the bourgeois woman into the public sphere and the heroic spaces, while Stockley’s patriotism is most often expressed through a preference for the heroic discourses.

The fundamentally unstable metamorphoses and shifts between “proper” and “improper” femininity in Stockley’s texts are discussed in detail in chapter 7.

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Introduction

Virginia Woolf claimed that writers such as Rudyard Kipling suffered from an excess of “virility” (96). Illustrating her aesthetic notion of “androgyny”, Woolf claims that Kipling’s writing would have little appeal for women readers in general, because of its lack of a certain “suggestive power” – a fertility and vitality of the text, which, in Woolf’s aesthetic, only comes about after a coupling of masculine and feminine principles within the author. Kipling, claims Woolf, is entirely destitute in this department – he “has [no] spark of the woman in him”, and this makes his writing “crude and immature” (97). In an ironic reversal of traditionally androcentric aesthetic judgements of women’s writing, Woolf dismisses both the subjects and emotional inflection of Kipling’s work because they attest to an exclusive masculinity:

It is not only that [Kipling and Galsworthy] celebrate male virtues, enforce male values and describe the world of men; it is that the emotion with which these books are permeated is to a woman incomprehensible. (97)

Woolf mocks Kipling’s characteristically heroic imperial style (“Sowers who sow the Seed”, “Men who are alone with their Work; and the Flag”), and playfully assumes the pose of maidenly embarrassment: “one blushes at all these capital letters as if one had been caught eavesdropping at some purely masculine orgy” (97). “Eavesdropping” implies that Kipling excludes a feminine readership, while “orgy” suggests that the noble masculine pursuits which are his theme and from which women are excluded, bear the marks of some mysterious masculine impropriety or excess.

This negative evaluation of Kipling assumes that all women readers would respond to such writing with similar distaste and amusement. Woolf’s evaluation appears to be based on the assessment that the heroic colonial discourse¹, such as that employed by Kipling, is a signifier of masculinity, and as such would appeal primarily to a male audience. However, two popular and prolific Southern Rhodesian women writers,

Gertrude Page and Cynthia Stockley, might have surprised Woolf in the extent to which they found Kipling's imperial enthusiasms not only "comprehensible", but, to some extent, an inspiration and model for their own work.²

Page (1872-1922) and Stockley (1872-1936) wrote, between them, thirty novels and collections of short stories, which often adopt the heroic discourse of the "masculine orgy" of British colonialism. However, in the process, their romances express certain important tensions. These tensions and ambivalences arise when white women, assuming the subject positions of patriotic citizens of empire and nation, and emulating the models of heroic adventure are attracted to what were in Woolf's eyes, profoundly "masculine" discourses and sub-genres of colonialism. In their writing, they attempt to find ways of avoiding the exclusion – Woolf's "eavesdropping" position – to which British imperialism often consigned British women. Following Robert Dixon, I have interpreted their romances (which hybridise domestic love story with imperial tale of adventure) as rereadings, or reinterpretations of the hegemonic sub-genres and discourses to which they are attracted (96). While employing the peculiarly "masculine" discourse which offended Woolf in Kipling's work, they exploit some of the "play" in this discourse, using it to assert a white woman's imperial, and later, nationalist subjectivity, no less racist and, in the case of Stockley, not much less misogynist than its masculine equivalents.

The primary ambivalences in their work are related to the fact that, in the domestic romance, the bourgeois values of feminine domesticity, settlement and sentiment traditionally reign supreme. These values are diametrically opposed to the heroism and forceful manliness required by the anti-domestic and stereotypically masculine adventure genre (e.g. Kipling and Rider Haggard) on which they model aspects of their work. In addition, the domestic and the heroic romance are associated

with rather different discourses of masculinity, femininity, empire and racial difference – discourses in which these key concepts often take on altogether different meanings. The tensions between these discourses and between the sub-genres to which they are aligned are not expressed identically in the work of the two writers, and can be seen to shift substantially in relation to historical circumstances and local political developments in Southern Rhodesia. In Stockley's fiction, the balance between heroic and domestic values is usually tipped in favour of the heroic. This preference is expressed in terms of a life-long nostalgia for the "unsettled" decade of British occupation of Southern Rhodesia, symbolised by the figure of the Rhodesian "pioneer". Stockley's anti-domestic bias is intensified by the powerful influence on her work of the ambivalent images of femininity to be found in sensation fiction. In contrast, the "settlement" of Southern Rhodesia quickly becomes Page's primary narrative goal, and her novels bridge the gap which exists in early twentieth-century women's popular culture between stories written for the "new girl" (who wants to be a boy) and what has been termed "the purity school" of the "new woman" romance. The resultant tension in their work between discursive and generic traditions seems to have been the central force behind the redefinitions of metropolitan femininities which can be found in the work of both novelists.

I have chosen Gertrude Page and Cynthia Stockley as the focus of this study because of their prolific output, and also because of their interesting position in Southern Rhodesian and Southern African history and literary history. The bulk of their novels were written during the period of Southern Rhodesian history (before the referendum of 1924) when imperial and settler nationalist discourses co-existed uneasily, and while metropolitan discourses about women and gender were in a state of flux between competing images of the Victorian "proper lady", and the sexually and economically

liberated “new woman”. While their novels have a particularly Southern Rhodesian flavour, their non-Rhodesian novels (set in England, America and South Africa) show interesting commonalities with their Rhodesian fiction.

Both Stockley and Page produced best-selling novels which were sometimes dramatised and filmed, and which helped to “invent” Rhodesia both in the metropolis and the colony. When, for the British coronation of King George V in 1911, an invitation was reserved for “the person who had done the most to publicise Rhodesia”, Page was the person chosen to receive such an honour – her novels “had done so much to give British readers knowledge of Rhodesia” (Tanser *A Sequence of Time* 209). Stockley’s contributions to metropolitan “knowledge” of Rhodesia were not as highly appreciated, however. Publicly criticised by a Lord Buxton, who claimed that her novels had “besmirched Southern Rhodesia” (Berlyn “... of women” 54), she was considered a novelist “of a lighter vein”, than Page, because of her greater sexual explicitness and she “earned some dubious comment over her ‘racy’ style” (Berlyn 54).

Page and Stockley wrote from within the gradually expanding but nonetheless powerfully restricted sphere which determined British middle-class women’s lives at the turn of the century. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the meaning of British femininity was hotly debated between feminists and those opposed to feminism. Both feminists and anti-feminists spoke of the rise of a “new woman” in Britain, although they disagreed violently as to what they should make of this phenomenon. It is of central importance to my study that the discourses about this “new woman”, whether positive or negative, were often couched in the discourses of empire and nationalism.

Esther Newton divides the history of nineteenth-century British feminism into two periods. From about the 1860s, the first generation of “new women” protested

women's exclusion from the public sphere, and especially from paid employment and formal education. The second generation (to which Stockley and Page both belong) were "born in the 1870s and 1880s and came of age during the opening decades of the twentieth century" (Newton 562). This second generation shifted the focus of their struggle towards a redefinition of feminine sexuality.

During the 1890s, the range of feminist political positions included those of mild reformers, such as Sarah Grand, who "deplored the constricting divorce laws and the condition of carefully nurtured ignorance and total inexperience in which young girls were supposed to choose their life partners" as well as radicals like Mona Caird, who "regarded the whole institution of marriage with such disfavour as to positively recommend its abolition" (Cunningham 2). Women's suffrage emerged as the major focus of feminist activism only a decade or so later, in the early twentieth century.

For the majority of middle-class women, however, these changes and debates would only gradually impact on their daily life, especially in South Africa, as Karel Schoeman indicates in his description of late Victorian urban white South African society:

Women played no part in public life, attended no public gatherings, and served on no public bodies; they neither signed petitions nor, in normal circumstances, wrote letters to the press, and they obviously had no franchise, whether locally or nationally. Generally, they spent their lives within the confines of their homes and their families, venturing abroad only for the most ordinary and trivial social events such as receptions, balls and concerts (Olive Schreiner 213).

Schoeman also shows that the well known myth by which Victorian middle class women's sexuality was constructed ("female innocence and purity ... had to be preserved at all costs" [Olive Schreiner 217]) was particularly powerful in South Africa during the debate over the Contagious Diseases Act (1868-1872). In the work of both Stockley and Page, feminine "purity" is redefined to include an awareness of

the “new woman’s” feminine sexuality. Crucially in their work, neither sexuality on the one hand nor race, nation and empire on the other hand can be imagined independently of one another.

Both Stockley and Page, in their lives, tested the boundaries of what constituted acceptable female behaviour for their time. Besides their unusual occupations as highly successful writers, both of their lives differed from the womanly norm in ways which carried over into their fiction. Page embodied respectable upper middle-class values, as daughter of a British MP and wife of a reasonably well-to-do Rhodesian cattle rancher. However, her political activism and involvement in public debates around Rhodesian Responsible Government and women’s suffrage moved her into the public, conventionally masculine, sphere. Her persona, borrowed from the “mannish” new women of her time, her preference for male company and her interest in intellectual and political pursuits, led her to be called a “man’s woman” (Playfair qtd. in Townsend 59).

Stockley was a “man’s woman” of a different type. Her public persona was sensationalised and took on the slightly scandalous shades suggested by the relative sexual explicitness of her novels. A journalist once commented archly that the colour scarlet “suited her” (I.B. “Pen Portraits”). Her “colourful” life (Berlyn “... of women” 54) included extensive travels, experience of the tumultuous 1890s in Rhodesia, employment as actress and journalist, an unhappy first marriage, subsequent divorce and remarriage, and finally, suicide.

Biographical Sketch: Cynthia Stockley³

In a 1925 interview, Stockley describes her childhood as “unhappy”, “lonely and solitary” (I.B. “Pen Portraits”). Given the early death of Stockley’s mother, her father’s remarriage, the regional economic depression, and her probably erratic

schooling, this may well be more than romantic exaggeration. On the other hand, this “unhappy” childhood also clearly became an essential component of Stockley’s own autobiographical myth and literary persona.

“Cynthia Stockley” was born on 7 July, 1872 in Bloemfontein, South Africa, as Lilian Julia Webb. She was the fifth child of a local builder and joiner (Schoeman Bloemfontein 268), Abel Webb, and his first wife, Mary Ann (née Corbett), who were both of Irish birth. Mary Ann Webb died at the age of 35 (when Stockley was only three years old) probably as a result of the birth of a short-lived sixth child. The death notice for Mary Ann attributes her death to “the immediate effects of puerperal fever”. It says something about both the state of medical knowledge and hygiene in Bloemfontein that this “inflammation after childbirth” is attributed to “excessive vomiting caused by noxious food”. Mary Ann’s death was accompanied by something of a local scandal after a local doctor found traces of arsenic baked into a piece of bread eaten by Mary Ann (Webb, Mary Ann: Express Obituary).

As Karel Schoeman points out in his study of the early history of Bloemfontein, the child mortality rate was high, and health conditions were far from ideal, with sickness accepted as an “unavoidable part of life” (Schoeman Bloemfontein 50). The Webbs owned a property in Fountain Street, a street which became notorious in later years as “petticoat lane”. (This street becomes the fictional childhood home of Stockley’s famous heroine, Poppy.) However, Webb was a respected member of the Bloemfontein community – he is referred to in Mary Ann’s obituary as a “well-known and respected master builder” (Webb, Mary Ann: Friend Obituary).

Mary Ann died intestate, and the financial records which document the value of the Webb’s joint estate show that they possessed three properties, and suggest a

fairly thriving demand for Abel Webb's services as cabinet-maker and builder – he repeatedly placed advertisements in The Friend for a “good carpenter”. However, unpaid debts which had to be settled upon Mary Ann's death forced Webb to sell two of their properties. In 1909, upon the death of his second wife, Webb still owned only the Fountain Street property although the intervening years had increased his assets from about £232 (in 1875) to £817 (Webb, Ann: Deceased Estate; Webb, Mary Ann: Deceased Estate).

Soon after Mary Ann's death, Abel Webb married again, this time a widow, Ann Newton (born Baldwin). She had a daughter, Emily, from her previous marriage, and later bore two sons, Charles Thomas and George Home. There seem to have been significant differences between Mary Ann's children and Ann's children in terms of their political allegiances, as the sons were later to fight on opposite sides in the Anglo-Boer war, and Stockley's fiction often distances her heroines from a “Boer” stepfamily or foster family.

Stockley's early childhood in Bloemfontein was a time of “drought and depression” (Schoeman Bloemfontein 96). This depression reigned until around 1886, when the discovery of gold in the Transvaal stimulated the Bloemfontein economy (Schoeman Bloemfontein 96).

Various accounts are given of Stockley's education. While the Dictionary of South African Biography claims, rather extravagantly, that she received a private education in England (781), the South African Nation reports, more modestly, that she attended school at St. Michael's Convent in Bloemfontein (I.B. “Pen Portraits”). Given the Webb family's financial position, and the seven other children supported by Abel Webb, the second option certainly appears to be the more likely. However, St Michael's School records contain no references to Lilian Julia Webb, or to any of her

sisters. The Who Was Who states simply that Stockley was educated “at home”. In fact, Karel Schoeman points out that during the depression of the 1870s even relatively wealthy Bloemfontein parents withdrew their children from school, or were unable to pay their fees. It is thus likely that Stockley alternated periods of formal schooling with informal lessons at home, depending on the state of the Webb family finances.

St Michael’s Convent, or Home, was the first girls’ school in Bloemfontein. The school was run by an order of Anglican nuns, and while providing an Anglican religious environment, it aimed to impart to its young pupils “a thoroughly sound English education, refinement of tone and manners and a healthy development of character” (Bishop Webb qtd. in Leith 6). Bishop Webb’s words clearly show the dual focus to be found in St. Michael’s Home and other similar Anglican girls’ schools, which emphasised both the development of an imperial-national character in their pupils, and simultaneously promised to provide an appropriately feminine “refinement” for the daughters of the middle class, who were seen to be “future mothers of the country”, and were charged with “moulding” the “coming generations” (qtd. in Leith 1973:8). While Stockley later displayed well-developed imperial sentiments, the lack of “refinement” in her novels would certainly have disappointed Bishop Webb and the sisters of St Michael’s.

In July 1910 a warrant was signed for Abel Webb’s internment in “the Lunatic Asylum, Bloemfontein” (later to become Oranje Hospital). A letter to an officer of the Public Health Department from the “Principal Medical Officer” of the Free State requests simply and chillingly, “I have the honour to request that you will sign the enclosed warrant for detention in the lunatic asylum, Bloemfontein, of the lunatic Abel Webb” (Webb, Abel: Lunatic). No other records exist to shed any light

on whether this detention was effected, and if so, for how long. Neither are there any records of Webb's death or deceased estate.⁴ However, Webb's detention followed shortly after the death of Ann Webb (29 August 1909), and took place during an ongoing battle (from 1904 -1911) between Webb and the Bloemfontein Town Council. This battle, from which Webb's lawyers appear to have benefited more than he himself did, concerned the effects on Webb's property of "improvements" to the spruit, which resulted in serious flooding of Webb's Fountain Street property (an irate tenant described the results as "a disgraceful cesspool") (Webb, Abel: Correspondence) and which caused a local surveyor to condemn the property (Webb, Abel: Correspondence). In a letter written on 17 October 1911, Webb's lawyer called for a special meeting of the town council, and referred, in support of his urgent application, to Webb's state of mental health: "the prolonged negotiations are leading to a break-up on the part of Mr Webb. I am using no idle term when I say this" (Webb, Abel: Correspondence). The town council finally purchased Webb's property on 11 November that year, only to return it to him the very same day, for which mysterious action no reason is given.

Incapacitated, inebriated, insane and irrational father-figures occur occasionally in Stockley's fiction, and may have been sensationalised versions of her own father. However, Stockley had left Bloemfontein long before Webb's real decline took place. In the early 1890s Stockley left home to become a trainee teacher in Kimberley. This was about twenty years after the discovery of diamonds near Kimberley had led to the influx of thousands of diggers and fortune hunters into the area. Soon afterwards, she left South Africa to visit her sister, now a Mrs Greenfield, at Fort Victoria in Mashonaland. In an interview with J.M. Boggie, Stockley claims that her novel The Claw contains a depiction of her journey into the region (85). This was a

rather unusual journey for a young white woman to make travelling unaccompanied. In the early 1890s, colonial society in Mashonaland was a man's world – few white women would have made this journey at all, apart from a few officials' wives, prospectors' wives and the prostitutes who are mentioned in the histories of early Salisbury (Tanser A Sequence of Time 163, Jeater 186). Boggie's account emphasises Stockley's pioneering status. She recounts close encounters with wild animals and depicts Stockley conveyed across unbridged rivers in a canvas bucket (85). From Palapye, Stockley travelled "alone" (which probably means that she was the only passenger), and took whatever rudimentary form of transport was available – wheel-barrow, post cart or donkey cart "driven by men, sometimes black, sometimes white, sometimes yellow, but always profane" (qtd. in J.M. Boggie, 85).

This visit plunged Stockley into the tumultuous events of the first decade of the occupation of Southern Rhodesia, and was to colour the rest of her career as a novelist. Her journey was undertaken only three years after Cecil John Rhodes' "pioneer column" first entered Mashonaland in June 1890. The expedition, bankrolled by Rhodes' British South Africa (B.S.A.) Company, invaded the territory under the rather dubious claim of the Rudd Concession – an agreement "extracted with consummate duplicity" from Lobengula and the Ndebele (Phimister 6). However, the B.S.A. Company was empowered by a Royal Charter (and was thus referred to as the Chartered Company) to administer the territory on behalf of the Imperial Government of Britain. The motives for the expedition were dressed in imperialist rhetoric, but, as Phimister points out, they were to a large extent financial, and were closely related to Rhodes' failure to profit substantially from the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand (5-7). To Rhodes, to many of the "pioneers" and also to B.S.A. shareholders, the expedition promised a "Second Rand" – the region was incorrectly fabled to contain vast

reserves of gold. However, a disastrous rainy season, malaria, horse-sickness and very little hard evidence of substantial gold deposits caused B.S.A. Company shares to plummet, despite the propaganda by which Rhodes kept his bubble of speculation from bursting. This propaganda, widely broadcast by the company during 1891, 1892 and 1893, may well have been what initially attracted Stockley's brother-in-law, Harry Greenfield, to the region.

Stockley arrived in Fort Victoria in 1893, during the decade which is described by Phimister as a period of "speculation and violence" in the region (4). When the "Second Rand" failed to materialise, speculators and settlers relied on the stock market and on looting as sources of wealth. Over-capitalised "development companies" survived on the investments of British shareholders: "the real goldmine was at Home, in the pocket of the British Public" (Phimister 10-11). The settlers and the Chartered Company also resorted to "looting the Shona and Ndebele economies" (Phimister 16). This "primitive accumulation" was cloaked in the guise of military expeditions and of administrative activities. By the time of Stockley's arrival, the "whisky-soaked frustration and wretchedness" of disgruntled Mashonaland settlers had become "a highly combustible mixture", and was soon to explode against the Ndebele in the war of 1893 (Phimister 10, 9).

This war, embarked upon as a "cheap confrontation", was considered by the settlers and the Company to have been the price they paid for British supremacy over Matabeleland and Mashonaland (Phimister 9). Stockley's brother-in-law, Captain Greenfield, was one of the thirty-three men killed with Major Allan Wilson in the Shangani Patrol against the Ndebele. The event, transposed into a heroic legend of British heroism and nobility in the face of Ndebele savagery was to become "one of the defining legends of the new colony" (MacDonald 132). Stockley herself later

fictionalised the event, but long before that it had become “by far the most prominent feature in the iconography of Rhodesian history” (Blake 110). The legend was deeply inflected by the “flavour of romantic imperialism” promoted by the Boys’ Own Paper and the works of Kipling and Henty and helped to establish the peculiarly imperial character of Rhodesian patriotism, a flavour which persisted in the colony long after it had died in the metropolis (Blake 110).

After the death of Captain Greenfield, Stockley (still, of course, named Lilian Julia Webb) and her sister moved to Salisbury. In May 1895 Lilian Julia Webb married Sergeant Philip George Watts Stockley, of the Salisbury Police. (As another settler remembers acidly, “for this courageous effort [Philip Stockley] was given a commission” – he was promoted to the rank of Captain [Stockley, Cynthia: Umtali Incident].) Less than a year after Stockley’s wedding, the Ndebele and Mashona Risings took place. These risings were essentially insurgencies in response to the looting, forced labour and violence to which many Ndebele and Mashona had been subjected since the British occupation of the region (Phimister 12-17). The risings took the whites of Southern Rhodesia entirely by surprise. The Umtali laager was thrown up hurriedly in response to the killing of over 100 settlers in Mashonaland. Stockley stayed in laager in Umtali, along with all the settlers from the surrounding areas, for the duration of the war, and during this time gave birth to her first child, a daughter.⁵ Stockley’s first novel, Virginia of the Rhodesians (1903), and a short story are set in this period. Virginia is unusual in the context of Rhodesian literature in that it does not reproduce all of the usual settler discourses of war. Nonetheless, Stockley’s perspective on this war is circumscribed by her limited frame of reference as settler. She displays no understanding of possible reasons for the insurgency, and makes no reference to the infamous cruelty by means of which, in the Umtali area, the Shona chief

Makoni and his people were compelled to surrender. (The caves to which they had retreated were dynamited [Ranger 275]).

Settler and Company voices defended the brutality with which the risings were suppressed in terms of the chivalrous defence of women and children, and as a plucky reassertion of British authority. Notable among these voices were Selous and Baden-Powell. However, several voices in Britain and South Africa constructed an alternative image of the whites in Mashonaland and Matabeleland as appallingly cruel, unscrupulous, and as a gang of lawless adventurers led by the avaricious capitalist, Rhodes. These opinions were forcibly expressed by the editor of Truth, Henry Labouchère, and in Olive Schreiner's novella Trooper Peter Halket.

A glimpse of Stockley's reaction to the masculine colonial world and its threats to the British definition of the "proper woman", can be gained from an unnamed settler's anecdote concerning Umtali during this time. The settler recalls a newly-married Stockley as having caused a "fracas" at the Umtali Masonic Hotel during a dance. Apparently, Stockley's argument with the host of the dance caused the disturbance. The anecdote records that Stockley reneged on a promise she had made to the host to dance with him, and was accused of having "bilked" him. Stockley, "tremendously irate", claimed to her husband that the host had "insulted" her, and an argument ensued. While "to bilk" means to cheat, it also means the evasion of payment, and could therefore have had the insulting sexual connotation that Stockley was not "delivering the goods". Whether this is really what "insulted" Stockley, will have to remain unknown, although it is also quite possible that the host had "insulted" her in another, more serious way which is not recorded in the anecdote. The male narrator of the anecdote clearly has no sympathy with what he portrays as Stockley's over-reaction, commenting that the majority of the women present would not have placed "any objectionable meaning on

the word" (Stockley, Cynthia: Umtali Incident). Stockley's novels are fantasies where women may in fact be admitted to the charmed circle of male camaraderie without the threat of permanent damage to their characters but also without losing any delicious opportunities for romance. She recuperates the lawless adventurers berated by British radicals, imagining them as essentially pure, noble and boyish.

By 1897, the brutal suppression of the Risings had re-established settler power in Southern Rhodesia. Stockley moved to Natal, via Beira, where she began her literary career, and specifically, her spell as a "pioneer woman journalist", which she describes as follows:

A Natal newspaper proprietor gave me a position on one of his papers as a political reporter. I knew nothing of politics in Natal, but I would go to Parliament every day and listen to the speeches and then write columns of personal comments on the speakers. This was far from being expert political journalism, perhaps; but it was, I may say, extremely popular (Boggie 87).

The terms of Stockley's employment are unclear. While she claims to have been a political reporter, it seems likelier that she may have been a fashion and gossip columnist who made occasional forays into political writing.⁶ About a year later, in 1898, Stockley left Natal for England, attempting, without success, to carve out a journalistic career for herself in London. At about this time, Philip Stockley disappears from the record – he and Stockley were eventually divorced, although I have been unable to ascertain exactly when this took place: "The marriage was not a happy one and freedom was attained" (I.B. "Pen Portraits"). The exact chronology of events in Stockley's life during these years is unclear, as contradictory records exist, and Stockley's own comments are vague and often unreliable. While she sometimes refers to a divorce in interviews, other records suggest that she was only able to marry again after Philip Stockley's death. The "Pen Portraits" interview (by I.B.) suggests that the couple remained married until after the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902). Another source reports that Philip Stockley died before

1903 (Stockley, Cynthia: Obituary) when Stockley wrote Virginia of the Rhodesians, although this is contradicted elsewhere. This was a period of intensely divided loyalties for Stockley. Her husband and a brother (one of Mary Ann's children) fought on the British side while her two half-brothers (Ann's children, Charles Thomas and George Home) were aligned with the Republicans (rather unusual in the context of the "violent outbursts" of British patriotism which characterised the South African English community at this time [Schoeman Only an Anguish 82]) (I.B. "Pen Portraits").

In London, because she was unsuccessful as a journalist, and needed to support herself, her daughter and probably a young baby as well (her son, Pat, was born sometime during this period), Stockley tried her hand at fiction. Stockley also lived in Paris during this period. In 1901, she wrote Virginia of the Rhodesians. After sending it from publisher to publisher for the following two years without success, Stockley finally found a publisher in 1903:

I was in despair of getting it into print, and a generous friend, Sir Charles Smith of Natal, who believed in my work, was on the point of paying for its publication ... A few months later, Hutchinson gave me 35 pounds down on account of royalty. In America they simply pirated the book (Boggie 87)

This publication did not solve Stockley's financial problems, however: "I was indeed so poor that I had to stop writing and go on the stage" (Boggie 87). Stockley joined Frank Benson's Shakespeare Company, and is mentioned in Lady Benson's book of Old Bensonians. However, she reports being unhappy as an actress: "I was far too shy and nervous, and I always suffered agonies from stage fright" (Boggie 89). This projection of herself as a "shy" and unwilling actress may well have been influenced by the social disapproval experienced by actresses at this time. Bridget Elliot points out that in London in the 1890s, actresses (like masqueraders, prostitutes and lesbians) were considered "deviant types", belonging to a class of females "whose very existence challenged middle-class feminine ideals of the dependent wife and mother" (34). To

Victorian London, actresses, like prostitutes, “openly flaunted their sexuality in the pursuit of careers”. In addition, they were on the receiving end of class prejudice “they were regarded as essentially members of the working class”, and were especially frowned upon, if, like Stockley, they combined their careers with marriage and children (45). During the time as an actress, Stockley toured America. How she combined this with motherhood is not mentioned, and, in the interview with Boggie, she discreetly draws a veil over this part of her life: “I prefer to forget that period in my life, which was both difficult and unhappy” (Boggie 89).

Stockley was able to leave the stage after the commercially successful publication of Poppy in 1909. This was by far her most popular novel, going into 27 reprints. It was thus her most lucrative novel, earning her £8000 in a couple of years – ten times the estimated value of Abel and Ann Webb’s joint estate in 1909. Poppy challenged several conventions regarding the representation of sexuality, and, according to Hugh Finn, “drew much comment by what was delicately described as its ‘outspokenness’” (8). According to J.P.L. Snyman, Sarah Gertrude Millin attributed Stockley’s success to her understanding of the lascivious tastes of South African readers:

Cynthia Stockley’s clientèle are not particularly interested in local colour or truth or style – they read her books for the passion – because she herself is so thoroughly interested in love. It is not a sign of deficiency on your part if Cynthia Stockley leaves you with a bitter taste in your mouth. (qtd in Snyman “Cynthia Stockley” 165)

Snyman in fact accords with this judgement.⁷ His final caustic comment about Stockley in his short review of her fiction and biography is that she was “many years ahead of her time in making use of sex and violence as a means of selling books” (“Cynthia Stockley” 165).

Poppy was certainly the novel which established Stockley’s name as a popular author. This success brought her further contracts, and enabled her to become a

professional writer. Later, several novels, including Poppy (The Claw, Dalla the Lion Cub, Garden of Peril) were made into films, and the film rights contributed substantially to her income – one alone brought in £500 (Boggie 90; Berlyn “... of the women” 54). Around 1914, she spent some years living and writing in Paris, in an apartment in the Latin quarter on the Rue Boissonade. During this time she also occasionally visited South Africa (I.B. “Pen Portraits”).

In 1916 Cynthia Stockley married Captain H.E. Pelham (Bunco) Browne, a Rhodesian farmer, and settled on the farm Sandvlei near Gwelo. She later spent increasing amounts of time in England, for “health reasons”, and purchased a house – Rainbow End – at Sheringham in the county of Norfolk. In 1923, Stockley’s son died upon his return home from college. Eight years later, Stockley returned to England from Rhodesia, staying initially in Buckinghamshire, and seven months later moved to London. One month later, on 15 January 1936, at the age of 64, Stockley committed suicide in an apartment in Bayswater, London. Ironically, her final book, Perilous Stuff (1936), contains a short story entitled “Suicide Season”. In this story, the heroine suffers a dangerous depression (brought on by the Rhodesian “suicide season”). However, in the romance, this depression is magically dissipated by the flowering of love between the heroine and her estranged husband.

Reports of Stockley’s death state that the cause of her death was coal gas poisoning. Pelham Browne was apparently “abroad” at the time. (“Death of Cynthia Stockley”) and her obituary comments pointedly that “she had no business worries” (“Death of Cynthia Stockley”). Some years before her death she had converted to Roman Catholicism, with which she had conducted an extended flirtation in her novels.

Stockley is characteristically contradictory about the autobiographical status of her fictions. On the one hand, her later novels are often prefaced by wordy disclaimers of any reference to real events or people: “to avoid the old vexatious charge of stealing character and using ready-made incidents, I have invented towns that were never on the map, and peopled them with persons who never had existence save in my imagination” (The Claw 1911 vi); “All characters in this novel are purely fictionary [sic]” (Kraal Baby 1933). On the other hand, various interviewers report her claim that some of her novels are partially autobiographical. An interviewer from The South African Nation states that in Poppy “she drew on her own childhood days for material” and indeed goes further to claim “one is safe in saying that in Poppy Cynthia Stockley writes her own story” (I.B. “Pen Portraits”). This claim is sensational, to say the least, as the novel was notorious for depicting the heroine’s early sexual experiences, and her lonely struggle in London to support her illegitimate child by means of writing, and acting.

Such claims may partially be blamed on the interviewer’s desire for racy copy, but Stockley’s authorial persona certainly does not appear to have discouraged such characterisations. The South African Nation interviewer introduces Stockley as the famous “Lady of the Scarlet Sunshade”. Stockley, she claims, was known by this name “[f]rom the Rhodesian veld of Gwelo to the beaches of Muizenberg and Durban”. She quotes another interviewer, Rachel Ferguson; whose claims echo the slightly scandalous linking of Stockley to her own fictions:

Miss Cynthia Stockley, the well-known writer of South African novels, looks more like her own books than a woman has any right to – and than any other writer does. A beautiful, delicately-haggard face “burnt out with passion”, with black triangular eyes set in with crooked charm; black magnolia-white skin[sic]; wearing a scarlet gown and given to jade necklaces and long earrings (I.B. “Pen Portraits”).



Figure 1: Cynthia Stockley in 1903.

A portrait of Stockley in 1903 (see Fig.1), after the publication of her first novel, and before she had really achieved much fame at all, shows her looking rather stern and contemplative in a respectably high-necked gown (“‘Virginia of the Rhodesians’: The Book of the Week”). However, the gown itself is a flowing, elaborately embroidered creation which suggests the bohemian circles in which Stockley moved at this stage in her life. Later portraits were even more clearly calculated to reinforce perceptions of the tragic, passionate authoress, and to align Stockley with her own heroines, who are often portrayed through a pre-Raphaelite stock of imagery, literary and artistic references and physical descriptions. For instance, a photographic portrait of Stockley, published in 1914, (see Fig. 2), depicts her in dramatic pose, with her hand at her breast, shoulders bare, face half-lit, and staring intently into a hand-held mirror (I.B. “Pen Portraits”). Her hairstyle and flowing garments recall the paintings of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, references to whom abound in Stockley’s sketches of the physical appearance of her heroines.

Stockley’s novel Poppy features the eponymous heroine as an orphan, with a dead Irish mother, hated aunt, burdensome and unfairly favoured cousins and uncle impotent against the power of his wife. Names such as “Georgie”, and “Tommie”, echo the names of Stockley’s younger step-brothers. The setting of the first part of the novel is Bloemfontein, while later sections are set in Durban and London. Poppy is also forced onto the London stage in order to earn a living, but, after many battles, becomes a famous author later in life. Unlike Stockley, however, Poppy’s career as a writer ends upon her marriage. This narrative implies that romance and passion will mean far more to Poppy than a career as famous novelist ever could. She is “the kind of girl who will live the wonderful stories that the other women write” (145).

Why Stockley assumed the name Cynthia in preference to her given names (Lilian Julia) has not become clear from my research, apart from some possible hints in her novel Kraal Baby (1933), whose heroine resents her name, Lily, for its connotations of purity and calm. She asserts her real identity, wild and exotic:

Lily! That pure and tranquil name belonged to me. Me, with the dark soul and thin, restless body hungering for strange untranquil things. Who wouldn't be a wild cat with such a name thrust upon them, I demanded of the walls
Mirabella, after the wild plum, I should like to have been called. Or Patagonia. Or Alsatia. Or Esterel. Or Orange-river. Something wild and free that one could sway to and chant in the brain (1-2).

Writing is not a common occupation of women characters in Stockley's novels. One such character, Cynthia Castaigne, does not give up her writing to become financially dependent on a man, and is featured in The Leopard in the Bush (1928). This character also bears the marks of passion on her appearance "she of the haggish beauty, a wraith, all profile and bones, and eyes of sorrow" (51). As a writer, she is shunned by Johannesburg society "the population of the Top Drawer", who hate her for depicting them in unflattering ways "she showed them up in their true colours – blaring yellows and shattering blues" (52). Most other female writers in Stockley's fiction are similarly despised by society. Like Stockley, Cynthia Castaigne is a woman writer raising two children on her own, and supporting them by the proceeds of her writing. For the character, the birth of twin children "successfully destroyed their mother's career as a notable novelist" and the need to earn money to support them forces her to write "potboilers" and "highly paid serial novels". Stockley aspired to literary and cultural "seriousness" – her novels are scattered with references to highbrow figures such as Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and various French and English aesthetes and decadents. Cynthia Castaigne's comment about the economic necessity of writing "potboilers" may well be Stockley's fictionalised explanation of the hurried and formulaic qualities of her own bestsellers (54,113).



Figure 2: Cynthia Stockley in 1914

The character Cynthia Castaigne suggests also that Stockley was all too aware of what Lyn Pykett calls “the catch-22 of the ‘professionalism’ of women writers”. Pykett explains that, on the one hand, “professionalism”, when applied to women writers, denigrated the quality of their work: “The (female) ‘professional’ wrote to order, according to set formulae, in order to satisfy markets”. On the other hand, women could not be “truly” professional “because their womanly duties must always come first” (201).

Biographical Sketch: Gertrude Page

Gertrude Page was born in 1873 in Bedford, England. She was the daughter of John. E. Page, a British M.P.. Page’s writing career began in England. Page began to write as a young child, adoring stories filled with “long words” (“A Popular Novelist”). Later, in England, she wrote for the popular girls’ magazine, Girls’ Own Paper, which was aimed at a middle-class readership of older girls and young women, and which was not as overtly feminist as some of its competitors (e.g. Girls’ Realm), although it was responsive to many of the changes in women’s status. Page published The Mysterious Strangers, a short piece of fiction, in 1902. Paddy the Next Best Thing (n.d.) may also have been published at this time, before her marriage: its “instant success” made her reputation as an author (Rhodesia Herald obituary qtd. in Townsend 61).

In London, Page was married to George Alexander (Alec) Dobbin, who was of Irish parentage, and had been born in India and been to school in Tunbridge Wells. A while after their marriage, in about 1904, the couple settled in Rhodesia, near Salisbury, on the relatively undeveloped and isolated “Home Farm”, in Borrowdale.⁸ Dobbin managed this large estate for its owners, the United Rhodesia Goldfields Company.



Figure 3: Gertrude Page in 1910

After 1904, United Rhodesia Goldfields decided to subdivide and sell certain parts of the Borrowdale estate. This allowed Dobbin to buy a large farm, which he called Carrick Creagh, and where he farmed in partnership with Page's brother, John Page, who had come to Rhodesia after having lived on the Gold Coast and in the Argentine.

The Rhodesia to which the Dobbins had emigrated was a rather different place to the Mashonaland visited by Stockley in the early 1890s. The initial clear division between Company officials and pioneers had "dissolved in the second half of the 1890s", and, in the interim, settler society, "had become noticeably fractured along lines of class and interest" (Phimister 34). The B.S.A. Company, somewhat disgraced after the abortive Jameson Raid and the 1895-6 risings, had been placed under the supervision of a Resident Commissioner, and had begun to revamp its "utterly chaotic" administration (29-30).

Settlers were given a measure of representation in the government of the colony, and the B.S.A. Company, with its shares at rock bottom, attempted to reconstruct the economy of the region along more productive, capitalist lines. The Company encouraged "the formation of a white rural bourgeoisie which, by developing the country, would raise the value of [Company] assets in the area" (Arrighi 19). However, the formation of this class required the destruction of the Shona and Ndebele economies. In order to recruit, control and exploit mine labour to the maximum, the administration resorted to expedients such as hut taxes, chibaro (forced) labour, coercive labour legislation, and the compound system. In 1903, Rhodesia had suffered a serious economic depression after the collapse of the mining shares market. Many settlers had left the country, or had had to mortgage their farms. However, after the recovery in the mining industry during 1904, the prospects for settler agriculture improved – the Dobbins settled in Rhodesia at the beginning of a period of vast growth in settler agriculture (59). Essential to this

growth was the systematic destruction of black cultivators, who, in 1904, “produced over 90 per cent of the country’s total marketed output” (Phimister 68). This source of competition was eliminated by decreasing the size of African reserves, redefining their borders to exclude fertile land, and expelling black families from farms occupied by settlers (Phimister 59, 77).

Organised settler agriculture was almost always at loggerheads with the B.S.A. Company. (G. Arrighi and Phimister both interpret this as a “conflict of interests between the British South Africa Company [international capital] and the national bourgeoisie” [Arrighi 25]). Initially objecting to the preference shown by the Company to mining interests, and its tolerance of absentee landlords, settler farmers later bitterly resented the shortages of labour in their sector, which were the result of the preference shown to the mining sector in the distribution of chibaro labour, and of “the extensive boycott of agricultural labour then practised by local blacks” (Phimister 85). As Phimister points out, while a tiny minority of Southern Rhodesian farms were large, well-capitalised, scientific and consequently successful, “the great majority of white farmers were perennially short of money, and possessed only the most rudimentary agricultural knowledge” (127). This growing majority had arrived in Rhodesia about a decade after the Dobbins had settled there, and constituted a rather different social group. While Phimister cites a report by a Director of Agriculture written in 1910, which describes the average Rhodesian farmer as “a man of substance, and often of experience and education as well”, a decade later this was decidedly no longer true (128).

The majority of white farmers had come to live “from hand to mouth”, partly as a consequence of the Chartered Company’s consistent underestimations of how much capital potential settlers would need to bring into the country. However, Phimister points out that their “amateurism and opportunism” also contributed to their difficulties (129).

He cites examples of farmers with inappropriate priorities, lack of a substantial work ethic, and a “get-rich-quick” view of farming as a “speculative gamble” which soon exhausted their soil. Page, although increasingly critical of this new generation of Rhodesian farmers, generally supported the politics of the settler farmers, and often used her fictional and journalistic writing to propagate their perspective.

Page wrote her first three Rhodesian novels in Borrowdale: Love in the Wilderness (1907), The Edge O' Beyond (1908), and Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy (1910). The publication of these novels, with their local setting, immediately made her something of a Rhodesian celebrity. These novels were also the books to which Page owed her seat at George V's coronation. Meanwhile, Paddy the Next Best Thing had already become her most popular novel, and, as a play, was to have a long and successful run of over 800 performances at the Savoy Theatre, London. This run broke the previous record at the Savoy – Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado. Paddy was then transferred briefly to the Strand Theatre, and then back to the Savoy, where it was still running at the time of Page's death.

By the time of Page's arrival in Rhodesia, the number of settler women was considerably higher than it had been in the 1890s, during Stockley's first stay. Substantial feminist histories of settler women in Rhodesia have not yet been written, and the feminist literary critic is forced to piece together a context from settler reminiscences (Madeleine Heald), short academic articles (Deborah Kirkwood) and from full-length histories where the focus is primarily on black women (Diana Jeater, Elizabeth Schmidt). The picture that emerges from these sources suggests the isolation, hardship, poverty and loneliness experienced by many settler women who lived on mines and farms. This image resonates on some levels with Doris Lessing's famous literary image of Mary Turner in her novel, The Grass is Singing. Lessing, however, in

depicting white women's dependence on black male domestic labour, highlights the economically exploitative and socio-sexual dimensions of a relationship which is elided or rendered unproblematic in the reminiscences. Lessing's poverty-stricken, bored, isolated and neurotic woman is married to a struggling Rhodesian farmer. Unable to move beyond her culture's inappropriate definition of femininity and a meaningless, powerless domestic role, she cannot live up to its standards either, and is excluded from the local class-conscious and sexist white community. Her life is reduced to a fruitless mental contest with what she perceives as a hostile African landscape and incomprehensible black servants. She eventually develops an intensely conflictual erotic relationship with her male servant, Moses, which culminates in her death.

Settler reminiscences occlude the sexual and racial traumas of the master-servant relationship as explored by Lessing. Occasional veiled references are made to settler society's fears of "black peril", in terms of the vulnerability of white women when left alone with black men (but interestingly, the reality of this threat is often denied). Lessing's picture is explained in Diana Jeater's history, where she suggests that the racial definition of the settler community as "civilised" was intricately linked with notions of gender, and settler ideas of moral and sexual "propriety" (45). However, in contrast to the image of Lessing's character Mary as broken and eventually destroyed by her social and psychological circumstances, the settler women's reminiscences suggest that many settler women found considerable satisfaction in overcoming the challenge presented by their domestic and family responsibilities, in the context of metropolitan expectations and standards regarding domesticity, and given their unfamiliar Rhodesian environment with its absence of many British domestic commodities. Many were isolated from medical services and other white women, and difficulties of transport are a repeated theme. Several women combined their domestic responsibilities with various forms of

employment, undertook “men’s” work such as furniture making, mining, and farming, or had to assume responsibility for the family while their husbands worked away from home for long periods. Although Page’s novels mostly demand that settler women’s experience of and contribution to the building of the British empire be acknowledged, she herself reduces the complexity and heterogeneity of the settler women around her to two or three bourgeois types – those sensitive and vulnerable to the threats posed by the alien environment, the tomboys who delight in the freedom and challenges it offers them, and the domestic drudges who tirelessly and thanklessly slave for their husbands and children. From Page’s perspective, it is the tomboys (who are able to make the most of their Rhodesian adventure, while being realistic about its dangers) who are prime empire builders and settler material.

As a celebrity, Page involved herself in local controversies, and often wrote leader and feature articles for local newspapers. Page’s novels reflect her moderate feminist opinions, which she expressed publicly as a leading voice in support of women’s franchise. She also apparently responded in print to “allegations that Native Commissioners were carrying out forcible recruitment among the Mashonas”, and attacked the practice as a form of “slavery” (Tanser A Sequence of Time 168, 239). Such philanthropism and concern for the well-being of Africans is by no means a characteristic of Page’s fiction. Instead, her novels generally avoid any representation of African dispossession and exploitation, in their focus on the domestic world of the settlers, where African workers and servants feature in the margins as comical, dehumanised elements of the Rhodesian environment. Occasionally her novels refer sarcastically and critically to the excesses of sentiment displayed towards Rhodesian “natives” by the British left, or by “Exeter Hall”.

Page's focus on the political contests between white interest groups and her relative silence about the racial dimension of politics in Rhodesia was, in fact, representative of settler politics as a whole. In fact, for the first forty years of Rhodesia's existence, political parties across the spectrum of settler opinion silently agreed to exclude "native affairs" from topics suitable for "political debate". This convention probably functioned to preserve a white consensus, and allowed racial issues to be "treated as technical and 'non-party'" (Blake 205).

A Mrs. Playfair, who lived on a neighbouring farm as a young girl, remembers Page in these years as a rather forbidding figure, whose serious attitude, masculine style of dress (see Fig. 3) and preference for male company singled her out among the female settlers:

Mrs. Dobbin was always dressed in a very severe and mannish way. My remembrance of her is always in tussore coats and skirts. She was a large, heavily-built woman – severe and unbending. I still had this impression when I returned to Rhodesia, aged about 18, after leaving school in England. Her most pronounced feature was her steely blue – or grey – eyes, impassive and distant. My mother always referred to her as a man's woman and she must have taken herself very seriously (qtd. in Hazel Townsend 59).

In September 1910, Alec Dobbin bought O'Meath ranch in the Umvukwes area (a high-lying plateau of rolling grasslands about a day's journey from Salisbury), where he was one of the first settlers. On their arrival there, Page was one of two white women in the area. Settler reminiscences of Dobbin are affectionate, (considerably more so than the reminiscences of Page) and reveal a tough and jocular personality, friendly although much given to profanity, and assertions of Irish pride: "beneath that apparently rough exterior there beat as fine an Irish heart, full of genuine warmth and friendship, as one could ever be likely to find in a human body" (Jack Fraser-Mackenzie qtd. in Townsend 36).



Figure 4: Gertrude Page in 1922.

Dobbin's rejection of the niceties of British decorum probably on occasion made him a difficult living companion. The extent of his refusal to conform to conventional domesticity and feminine authority is suggested by the following anecdote:

On one occasion ... a lady visitor reprimanded him for feeding his Red Setters at the table. Whereupon he replied that it was his bloody house and he would do as he pleased. He then threw the entire roast to the dogs! (Bamber 19)

Dobbin farmed mainly with livestock, running 1500 head of cattle on his ranch, although he also grew maize and tobacco on a smaller scale. Page's brother, John, joined him there after tsetse-fly had rendered abortive an attempt at cattle ranching in Northern Rhodesia. The small settler community had an active farmers' association, in which Alec Dobbin held office, and to which Page was admitted as the first female member in 1920.

Umvukwes settlers were agreed that Page based her novels "Where the Strange Roads Go Down" and The Veldt Trail on her experiences at O'Meath ranch: "difficulties in housekeeping, ... battles with untrained and dirty servants, the lack of amenities which we now take for granted, the ugly homes of corrugated iron and brick, and the loneliness" (Townsend 58). The "main" road to Salisbury passed between the Dobbins' kitchen and toilet and the rest of the house - a far cry from the British domestic ideal of the time, which relied upon the separation of public space from private (Townsend 80).

Page spent the war years in England. During this time, she and Dobbin travelled England giving lectures and public readings about Rhodesia in the military hospitals. Dobbin was refused permission to enlist in the army, and instead, became a voluntary Red Cross driver ("A Popular Novelist"). After 1918, Page became a convert to a spiritualist doctrine - she referred to it, in the dedication of her book The

Veldt Trail (1919) as “the radiant, sunlit pathway of Higher Thought”, to which she was apparently introduced by a friend, Mrs. Pat MacLean.

The debates about Rhodesia becoming part of the Union of South Africa and the settler campaign for “Responsible Government” for Rhodesia were the two major political issues in which Page became involved. When the Royal Charter which gave the B.S.A. Company authority over Rhodesia came up for review in 1914, the Chartered Company held onto its position by representing its opponents in the Legislative Council elections as pro-“Union”. As most historians point out, the settler vote for the extension of the Charter was less an indication of settler support for the B.S.A. Company than it was an indication of their extreme opposition to the notion of “Union”. Although the rapidly growing settler agricultural sector had been calling for Chartered rule to end since at least 1906, and although dissatisfaction had actually increased as the growing number of new farms exacerbated an existing shortage of labour, in the 1914 election, internal divisions receded in the face of a perceived external threat. The division between English and Afrikaans was perceived as a “racial” issue and was surrounded by racist feeling. In this case, the threat of being submerged within an Afrikaner-dominated Union of South Africa and a powerful sense of shared British identity won the day. Page participated actively in the Union debate, and used her novels The Silent Rancher (1909) and The Rhodesian (1912) to propagandise against Union. Her polemic in these novels asserts a Rhodesian identity based on powerful imperial loyalties. This brand of imperial sentiment was, as Frank Clements pointed out, by 1922 already almost anachronistic – “loyalty to a Britain and a British way of life that was already fast vanishing” (qtd. in Blake 188). For Page, Rhodesian identity was built on a muscular Englishness more aware of the requirements of high imperialism than was the metropolis itself.

Soon afterwards, however, in 1917, in a move which indicated that Union and Charter were no longer seen as mutually exclusive, the Responsible Government Association (R.G.A.) was formed, “in part based on the Rhodesia Agricultural Union, an organization of farmers who feared Union on grounds of competition for black labour on the Rand” (Blake 179). The R.G.A.’s victory in the 1920 elections against international capital (as represented by the Chartered Company) was based upon the support of a “loose and heterogeneous coalition” of farmers, white workers, small traders, newly-enfranchised white women and others (Phimister 100-101).

Around 1920, Page began to suffer severe ill-health and spent most of her time in London. Nonetheless, she was still actively engaged in political manoeuvring for Rhodesia. Although she was known as an active supporter of Responsible Government, and of Sir Charles Coghlan of the R.G.A., Page apparently remained nostalgically attached to a dream of upper-class leadership for Rhodesia – Anthony Chennells reports that “Page approached Coghlan in 1920 and asked him to stand down from the leadership of the Responsible Government Party in favour of a public school man” (308). In the 1922 referendum, a majority of Rhodesian settlers voted for Responsible Government and rejected the option of Union. Jan Smuts of South Africa commented regarding this referendum:

[The Rhodesians] are afraid of our bilingualism, our nationalism, my views of the British Empire. In fact they are little Jingoese and the sooner they are assimilated by the Union the better for them and for us (qtd. in Blake 186).

The limited self-government ushered in by “Responsible Government” naturally only applied to white settlers, and was ambivalent about even these settlers’ capacity to govern themselves. The constitution which enshrined Responsible Government was designed “to protect the rights of capital, prevent discriminatory legislation against Africans without Imperial sanction, and stop Southern Rhodesia from passing laws

incompatible with the more general interests of the Imperial connexion” (qtd. in Phimister 118). This ambivalence also applied to the question of national identity – until 1949 there was no such thing as Southern Rhodesian citizenship (Phimister 117). Nonetheless, after the Referendum, the settler Legislative Assembly was generally regarded as “the competent body to pass laws for the whole population, not simply for the minority who had the vote” (Blake 193), and, as Blake points out, the fact that this system allowed considerable independence from Britain for white Rhodesia is apparent from Rhodesia’s 1925 inclusion under the jurisdiction of the Dominions Office, rather than remaining within the Colonial Office (Blake 193).

Between 1902 and 1922, Page published eighteen fictional works. This stream of novels (sometimes two per year) gained her immense popularity. While not in the same league as bestsellers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, which sold more than 1,5 million copies in Britain and the colonies alone, several of Page’s novels ran to over 100 000 copies each, 3 novels sold more than 200 000 copies, while in total, she sold “just short of 2 million” copies of her novels (Bamber 15).

In 1922, despite ill-health, Page returned to Rhodesia. On Saturday 1 April, she died in Meikles Hotel, Salisbury, from a stroke, at the age of 49. Her coffin was removed to O’Meath for internment. As a gesture of a settler’s relation to the African landscape, her burial echoes that of Cecil Rhodes and Olive Schreiner. She was buried on the top of a granite koppie

which commands a magnificent view of the ranch and surrounding country and on which she was wont to do much of the thinking out of the plots and the writing of her books So she rests forever in the country of her adoption which she loved with such passionate devotion. (Rhodesia Herald qtd. in Townsend 1967:62).

After her death, a sub-editorial of the Rhodesia Herald (entitled “A Loss to Rhodesia”) comments politely that “several women writers ... could ... be singled out as finer literary artists and more profound thinkers” but celebrates Page primarily for her admirably nationalist sentiments:

Miss Page was, it may be said, a Rhodesian of the Rhodesias. Devoted to the country and to the traditions associated with the name of its founder, she elected to make her home here on a typical highveld ranch at a time when her success as a writer and dramatist enabled her to seek rest and comfort in the Old Country (qtd. in Townsend 59).

A lengthy obituary notice in the same publication applauds her for the “pluck and cheerful philosophy which are among the distinguishing traits of her writings” (qtd. in Townsend 59).

Critical assessments

Reviews of Page’s and Stockley’s novels in The Times Literary Supplement were, on the whole, positive. Individual reviewers’ bias towards Victorian or post-war sexual morality generally determined their perspective. (One reviewer sees Page as “curiously naïve and old-fashioned”, while another, shocked, claims that the fiction “might almost be read as a plea for chaperons” [“Where the Strange Roads Go Down”; “Winding Paths.”].) Several reviewers note the literary, stylistic and grammatical shortcomings of the works. Nonetheless they generally recommend the books to readers – The Dream Ship is “a striking story, imaginatively told” (“The Dream Ship”), Some There Are is “most amiable” (“Some There Are”), The Great Splendour is “prettily conceived romance which has many humorous situations”, The Claw is “full of life” and “vivid” (“The Claw”). A longer review judges Page to be unlike “the lady novelist and the novelette of five and twenty years ago” because, despite her shortcomings as a writer, her reputation as a political writer (“the name and lure of Rhodesia and its problems”) qualifies her as a serious writer, able to

convey “trenchant, perhaps sound, views on Rhodesian and Chartered Company government”. Her feminist views are applauded: “Miss Page’s subject, after all, is the service asked by life of overstrained women in a new country, and on that she discourses with a knowledge and wisdom wholly to be commended. Miss Page is on the side of the angels”. The review concludes that although Page’s exhortations might have been more at home in essay or pamphlet form, her target audience would have been unlikely to come across them in such a form: “few people – and no prospective Colonial brides – read pamphlets” (“Where the Strange Roads Go Down”). Reviews of *Poppy* in the Observer, Westminster Gazette, and the Daily Telegraph term it a “remarkable” book, and praise Stockley as “a writer of unusual ability”, comparing her to both “Miss Braddon” and “Miss Olive Schreiner” (qtd. in Virginia of the Rhodesians frontispiece).⁹ Most revealing is the review of Stockley’s The Claw which, while generally positive, comments negatively that the novel’s sensationalism betrays certain unwritten imperial laws – “its intense emotionalism seems somehow a little excessive for an Anglo-Saxon colony” (“The Claw”).

More “serious” literary assessments of Stockley and Page occur less frequently, and, when they do, are considerably less forgiving than the TLS reviews. Neither Stockley nor Page are mentioned in either Malvern van Wyk Smith’s Grounds of Contest: A Survey of South African English Literature or Stephen Gray’s Southern African Literature: An Introduction. This may be because of the Rhodesian flavour of much of their writing (although Stockley was born and raised in South Africa, and both Stockley and Page wrote about South Africa) but is probably also because their fiction belongs to the less highly valued categories of “popular fiction of colonial adventure, ‘backveld’ comedy and escapist romance” (Van Wyk Smith 51). Stockley and Page received virtually no critical attention until 1982, when they feature

prominently as representatives of early Rhodesian settler fiction in Anthony Chennells's comprehensive study "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel". Before that, apart from scattered references in Rhodesian historiography, they were only commented upon briefly and dismissively by Hugh Finn, Manfred Nathan, Sarah Gertrude Millin and J.P.L. Snyman.

Finn comments only on Stockley's legendary sexual "outspokenness" and relegates Page to oblivion on account of her having written "best-sellers" (8). Snyman takes rather longer to dismiss them, but does so nonetheless, and his disapproval of Stockley is particularly formidable. He is appalled by Stockley's lack of chivalry towards women – he criticises her "cruel references to the way of life and thought of Rhodesian womanhood", and, in a surprisingly morally judgemental tone, calls Poppy a "torrid love story" ("Cynthia Stockley" 6). Another interesting misreading is his labelling of Poniola (1923) as a Temperance tale. Citing the support of Manfred Nathan and Millin, he attributes Stockley's popularity to the taste of the South African public for sexual titillation. His discussion of Gertrude Page is less acid, because, like the earlier TLS reviewer, he perceives her to be sincere and "serious" as a Rhodesian patriot, and "an earnest champion of women" ("Gertrude Page" 183). He expresses reservations about Page's spiritualism – "[h]er obsession with Higher Thought" and finds her literary achievements mediocre ("sentimental and sensational"). Nonetheless, his final assessment of Page is that "[s]he was an honest writer," though lacking in ability. More recently, Irene Gorak and Grant Lilford have both juxtaposed a brief analysis of Page's Love in the Wilderness with Olive Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm and Doris Lessing's The Grass is Singing respectively. Both studies focus on the allegorical elements in Page's writing. Lilford's discussion contrasts Lessing's and Page's texts with Bessie Head's When

Rain Clouds Gather, thus interestingly highlighting the competing forces of industry, illness, and idleness which govern the coloniser's response to the African landscape.

However, the only critic who has considered the writing of Stockley and Page in any detail, and in its historical and literary context, is Anthony Chennells. Chennells discusses Stockley and Page as part of his broad and detailed historical overview of what he terms "settler myths" in Southern Rhodesia. He identifies in these novels a general evasion of the "realities" of colonial Zimbabwe in the texts of settler Rhodesia. He sees this evasion as clothed in particular "myths" which dominated the white Rhodesian imagination from the British Occupation in 1891 until Zimbabwean independence: first, the mythical motifs of the imperial romance tradition; second, a Rhodesian settler identity constructed in relation to the Rhodesian landscape, expressed through the dialectic of the pastoral of settler freedom, on the one hand, and the pastoral of order (settler productivity) on the other; and, finally, the myth of an absolute gulf between black and white. His discussion points out that Arthur Shearley Cripps and Lessing, though still influenced by the myths, were the only settler novelists able to take an ironic perspective on the beliefs of their countrymen and women.

Chennells explains the power, endurance and ubiquity of these "myths" (in the absence of a coherent Rhodesian literary tradition) as proceeding from "certain conventional ways of regarding Rhodesia" (xv). These particular qualities would, in the jargon of a more recent movement in literary criticism, probably be explained in terms of "colonial discourse". However, for Chennells, the specifically Rhodesian nature of the novels supercedes their identity as products of British imperialism, or their status as examples of Southern African literature. He regards the novels as similar to other African settler fiction largely in relation to racial issues, although even

here he points out that “the novelists made the issue a particularly Rhodesian problem and insisted that Rhodesians would deal with it in their own way” (x). While Chennells possibly underestimates (especially in relation to the representation of the landscape) the general similarities between early Rhodesian fiction and colonial fiction generally, his meticulous attention to addressing the regional and historical specificity of the novels provides a necessary antidote to the generalisations across broad expanses of time and space which currently characterise the more self-consciously “theoretical” exponents of colonial discourse theory. Chennells’s comments suggested to me the need to provide an analysis of the relation of a nascent Rhodesian nationalism to British imperialism in the first thirty years after the Occupation, before Rhodesia gained “Responsible Government”. My study centres upon the crucial role of gender in the representation of patriotism during that period, specifically of Stockley and Page.

Chennells’s discussion of Stockley and Page places them in the context of the Rhodesian settler pastoral tradition – which they played an important role in establishing. The imperial romance tradition, dominated by figures such as H. Rider Haggard, according to Chennells, leaves only occasional traces on the novels of Stockley and Page. He sees the Rhodesian pastoral as ethnocentric – an Arcadia of wide, free “empty” spaces required the settlers to ignore “the real Arcadians who surrounded them” (166). A similar selective representation of the settler community made the Rhodesian pastoral class-bound: “[Eden] will only satisfactorily be inhabited by the British upper-classes” (182). Following theorists such as Raymond Williams, Chennells notes that pastoral art generally fled contemporary British reality by depicting “a fresh green landscape that offered man a wholeness and dignity denied to him in an England of enclosures and mill towns” (163) and, thus, in the

Rhodesian context, offered a convenient way of evading issues of racial cruelty “If Blacks were simply ignored, cruelty was not at issue” (473).

Chennells links the freedom from metropolitan convention suggested by the colonial pastoral (which he finds primarily in the early novels of Page and most of Stockley’s novels) to a nationalist motif which resonates with the eugenic impulses of “racial improvement”. The wilderness provides colonists with “an opportunity to discover in themselves those qualities of their own national character that once made England great” (167). Through a unique communion with nature, “a superior type of Englishman will emerge” (168). This pastoral establishes an enduring opposition in the Rhodesian novel, where “England corresponds with convention and artificial life; in Rhodesia man is natural and his individuality can flourish, unchecked by questionable rules” (178).

Chennells points out that both Page and Stockley (and, later, Doris Lessing) identify the liberating possibilities of African space with varying degrees of sexual freedom. For both Page and Stockley “freedom to follow passion” (179-80) is the major theme of their work. In comparison to what Chennells sees as Stockley’s occasional “honest sensuality”, he finds only pretence, “a rhetoric of free love” in Page (180). However, he does not consider this motif of sexual freedom in relation to the gender of these writers, nor does he relate it to the sexual politics and discourses of the time, and, in providing this link, I feel that my study fills a necessary gap. I also believe that Chennells’s highly comprehensive study of the development of Rhodesian nationalism through novelistic fiction is complemented by my observations about the central role of gendered discourses in making such a nationalism possible.

Chennells reverses the judgements of previous critics such as Snyman. While he appreciates Stockley's "honest sensuality" and lack of snobbery, he is surprisingly hostile towards Page, and scatters his discussion with references to her literary and logical ineptitude. He berates her for her "clichés and contradictions" (51), and her "muddled mysticism" (51), and describes her Love in the Wilderness as a "demonstrably stupid novel" (185). Her repeated assertions of a mild form of feminism are ridiculed rather than analysed: "the wretchedness of intelligent women on bush farms is referred to often enough in Page's novels" (184). While Chennells's judgements of Page may have a certain validity, it is unfortunate that, beyond observing that Stockley and Page both wrote domestic fiction, he did not evaluate her achievements (or lack thereof) in the context of the conventions of the sentimental and domestic romance tradition. This tradition was the dominant model for women's fiction at the time, and Stockley and Page wrote, to a certain degree, within its constraints. These shortcomings of Chennells's discussion are, of course, attributable to the fact that, at the time of his study, feminist criticism was as yet an embryonic discipline.

A similar lack of analysis of the sentimental novelistic tradition is apparent in Malvern van Wyk Smith's overview of South African literature. He sums up the different trends within South African writing by referring to the dichotomy between the literature of what he terms the colon and the literature of the settler. The colon, or "semi-permanent colonial sojourner", produces the South African romance (such as those of John Buchan and H. Rider Haggard), an allegory of good (European) and evil (African) in which

the colonial terrain is always an exotic alternative to a "real" existence elsewhere, in the metropole, and never to be taken entirely seriously or in its own right; the mode is regressive, atavistic yet often elegiac, mourning the loss of a pastoral and heroic world,, since the European world, though "real" may also be

presented as decadent or constricting, while the colonial world allows a return to simpler and purer values (9)

In contrast, claims van Wyk Smith, the more serious commitment of settlers to their adopted country produces a literature of realism, which confronts the wilds, and tends to be “rationalist, liberal and progressive”, engaged in “a stoic humanism of transaction and affirmation” (9). This broad categorisation does not really accommodate the domestic and sentimental novel, which, as romance, is certainly not necessarily governed by either realism, rationalism or liberalism. Neither, in its domestic focus, does it fantasise about a return to the wilderness. The domestic romance, which, as will be discussed below, makes femininity and domestic space its focus, often to the exclusion of political and racial concerns, cannot finally be placed on either side of Van Wyk Smith’s colon/settler axis. Nonetheless, it could be argued that these “women’s” romances (by authors such as Stockley and Page, and their South African equivalents, such as Francis Bancroft) deserve consideration in constructing a schema of South African fiction, if only because of their immense popularity.

My study considers Chennells’s observations about Rhodesian “myths” in the work of Stockley and Page in terms of certain insights provided by colonial discourse theories. In addition, I view these myths, or discourses, as gendered discourses, which I consider in the context of the dominant genres available to writers like Stockley and Page, expanding Van Wyk Smith’s distinction between the heroic romance of the colon and the realism of the settler, to include an analysis of the interaction of the domestic romance with the more literary and academically respectable sub-genres of the Southern African novelistic tradition. A full understanding of the negotiations at work in the fiction of Stockley and Page is also not possible without an awareness of the currents in popular fiction by, for, and about women in Britain at the turn of the

century, including the novels of sensation, the “new woman” fiction, and the popular fiction written for girls, which are all sketched in the following chapter.

¹ I use the term colonial discourse to suggest my agreement, in general terms, with the approach to the study of colonial texts as undertaken by Edward Said (in his influential study, Orientalism). This approach has been taken in various directions by other theorists, and has become known as “colonial discourse theory”. As explained in the following chapter, Said’s approach adopts the notion of discourse from Michel Foucault to analyse Western representations of the Orient. My distinction between heroic and bourgeois discourses as contending alternatives within the colonial project, and as related to the heroic and bourgeois romance sub-genres of the novel, is elaborated in chapter 1. To summarise, however, this distinction corresponds broadly to two fictional modes of imagining colonialism and the coloniser. The one, which I term “heroic”, is focused on adventure and exploration; the other, which I term “bourgeois”, emphasises settlement, cultivation, productivity and “civilisation”. I will show in chapter 3, that, although I refer to a singular “heroic discourse”, the heroic romance was itself divided between two contradictory masculine imperatives.

² Following the practice of Anthony Chennells, I have generally used the term Rhodesia in this study instead of the historically more accurate Southern Rhodesia, except when I wish to emphasise the official colonial identity of the territory.

³ These brief biographical sketches for Stockley and Page rely primarily on secondary accounts of their lives, and on published interviews. With the exception of some of Page’s correspondence with political figures, I have been unable to trace the diaries, letters, or manuscripts of either writer. My study thus views them primarily as they appeared to the public eye: through interviews, their journalistic writing, and in the written reminiscences of others. I have also consulted certain archival sources. The archival records of the Webb family are housed in the Free State Archives and are all official documents. The Zimbabwe National Archives contains short biographical sketches, certain memoirs, and the political correspondence mentioned above. However, the limited time and financial resources available for this project have not permitted an exhaustive search of, for instance, archival materials and publishers’ records in England.

⁴ Whatever the length of his stay, given the nature of mental asylums at this time, Abel Webb is unlikely to have received pleasant treatment. In 1908, an exposé of conditions at the Orange River Colony Asylum by a journalist from the Bloemfontein Post sparked an investigation, conducted by the Asylum Management Committee. While the investigation cleared the institution of the charges of “inhumane treatment,” this judgement is couched in disquieting terms: “Insanity took various forms, each of which required different treatment, and though at first sight certain treatment might appear rather hard, it was impossible to avoid this, as had been shown in the cases investigated.” (Bloemfontein Archives CO 1398 580 10 November 1908:4)

⁵ This daughter’s married name was Mrs Wymer.

⁶ Stockley does not in fact, appear to have been employed as a political reporter, but as a fashion columnist. See Chapter 3 for a full discussion of this period in her life.

⁷ Snyman plagiarises Millin’s comments about Stockley in his published study The South African Novel in English (162).

⁸ Though primarily a mining company, United Rhodesia Goldfields decided to develop Borrowdale in response to the perception that there was a need to “develop agriculture” in Rhodesia (Tanser A Scantling of Time 209).

⁹ “Miss Braddon” was probably Mary Elizabeth Braddon. Braddon was an unconventional and prolific writer of 1860s sensation fiction, who, like Stockley, wrote and acted to support herself and her family. She lived with the married publisher John Maxwell for fourteen years before they were able to marry. Known as “the inventor of the fair-haired demon,” Braddon’s novel Lady Audley’s Secret (1862) uses an “angelic-looking blonde as a deviant woman” (Claire Buck 363).

Chapter One:

The Heroic and the Bourgeois Romance: Reading Women's Popular Fiction (Late Victorian and Early Edwardian Britain)

A major trend in the study of women's popular fiction has been the reader-oriented work by feminist critics such as Tania Modleski, Janice Radway, Bridget Fowler and Lyn Pykett. These studies, although very different, have in common their refusal to accept a simple dismissal of the romance as an inherently conservative form. Readers of romances, they agree, characteristically adopt a range of positions in relation to the narrative, and do not simply identify with the expressed sentiments of the narrator or heroine, or with the resolution and closure provided by the ending. Instead, to use Pykett's summary of this perspective, "women romance readers ... do not merely passively consume their chosen texts but commonly read against the grain" (77). The ethnographic, interview-based research which helped Radway and Fowler to understand the responses of their readers attempts to answer the question: "How do women decode literature?" (Fowler 3).

Such a reader-oriented approach would be impossible to replicate in this study, as I am not dealing with recently authored texts, or with readers who are still alive. Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to interview any of the hundreds of thousands of readers who bought the romances of Cynthia Stockley and Gertrude Page some ninety years ago. Although many insights can be gained from studying Fowler's and Radway's conclusions, it is also important to note that the historical conditions of production and reception of Page's and Stockley's texts differ considerably from those which govern the twentieth-century mass marketed woman's romance. I have, however, drawn strongly on the work of Pykett, who applies the insights of Radway *et al.* to the popular fiction of

now vanished generations. Pykett uses the vocabulary of film theory to analyse the range of shifting positions and identifications that would have been available to readers of 1860s sensation fiction, concluding that

As a consequence of these shifting perspectives the female reader has the complex narrative pleasure (simultaneously or by turns) of spectating and participating in an exciting deviance, and in the moral judgement of that deviance, as well as spectating and participating in the punitive social and emotional consequences of transgression (81).

These studies of popular women's fiction suggest extremely important questions in the context of the text-oriented considerations of colonial discourse theory – now a popular approach to texts which have their historical origin in the colonial period.

Colonial Discourse Theory

Colonial discourse theory, when modelled on the work of Edward Said, often adopts an early Foucauldian understanding of the fundamentally constraining yet prolifically reproductive power of discourse. Foucault's early work defines discourse as the limiting yet productive linguistic order which controls, within given historical, political and institutional contexts, that which can be legitimately said, and that which cannot be articulated. Said highlights (as many others who adopt his perspective also do) the Western production of knowledge about its "others" as legitimated by what he terms "colonial discourse". According to Said's model, the text perpetually repeats particular formulas and stereotypes – in the context of colonialism these are the stereotypes and rationales which arose to justify and explain the colonial project. In contrast, the above-mentioned theorists of the woman's romance emphasise the flexibility hidden within, and essential to the workings of, the fixed formula. The questions suggested by this juxtaposition are: can we (as discourse theorists do) "read off" from the discursive features of the text its historical "power-effect" – i.e. how it, through its readers, contributed to the proliferation and institutional power of the

discourses from which it springs? Given the historical and geographical variation within discourses of colonialism, what are the processes by which these discourses pass from writer to reader to writer and in so doing mutate and evolve? Centrally, how do the historical contexts, identities and subject-positions of the writers, speakers and readers of a discourse influence its production, meaning, and legitimation? To answer these questions, it is necessary to consider a range of theoretical perspectives on colonial discourse.

Even a cursory survey of the field of colonial discourse theory reveals that the unitary implications of the word “theory” (insofar as it is used to imply a totalising explanation, emanating from a particular supposition, system of ideas, or point of view) are somewhat misleading – the term in fact describes a collection of diverse approaches, vocabularies and theoretical perspectives. Several of the approaches are in themselves eclectic, and draw on various forms of explanation for different aspects of the colonial phenomenon.

Besides the Foucauldian genealogy (Edward Said, Patrick Brantlinger) which gives “discourse analysis” its name, one encounters the following perspectives: the relatively untheorized discussions of colonial “stereotypes” (to be found in collections such as John MacKenzie’s Imperialism and Popular Culture [1986]); the Hegelian master/slave dialectic and the phenomenological concept of the Other which inform the work of Frantz Fanon and Abdul JanMohamed (who also draws on an Althusserian model of subject-constitution); the psycho-analytical reading of the colonial encounter by Octave Mannoni and Frantz Fanon; and the deconstructive and psycho-analytic identification of ambivalence, hybridity, fetishism and mimicry alongside the power-effects of the discourse (Homi K. Bhabha, Anne McClintock, Robert Young).

Much colonial discourse theory is not entirely useful in answering the questions articulated above, as it often tends to oversimplify and generalise, reducing the colonial encounter to “the simple binary of master and slave, colonizer and colonized” (Robert Young White Mythologies 5). This Hegelian binary is inadequate to explain the throng of “internal” differences, which become apparent to someone interested in the historical and geographical variations in the manifestation of colonial discourse, of which women’s difference is merely one example. As Ann Stoler suggests, the construction of a “self”, from which position the Western subject could relate to its “others”, was a far more complex process than is often imagined in the study of colonialism (98-99).

It is the process of “self-construction”, then, rather than an exclusive focus on the representation of the “other” in the Southern Rhodesian colonial context which provides the central focus of my study. I analyse the tensions, ambivalences, and exclusions which helped to define the meanings of white bourgeois masculinity and femininity, especially in terms of their relation to the patriotic discourses of the time. I diverge from the sometimes overly generalised notion of a unitary and universal “Colonial Discourse” in my interest in the local and regional specificities of the colonial project in Southern Rhodesia. The more deconstructive and anti-binarist approach to colonial discourse theory, as ushered in by the work of Homi K. Bhabha, has been extremely helpful to my analysis, based as it is upon an identification of a series of anti-essentialist principles which govern colonial discourse – mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence and fetishism. The power of this approach, as Diana Jeater has pointed out, lies in its view of colonial identity as unstable, because built on the perpetually shifting sand of the discursive interplay between “self” and “other”:

Simple models of the construction of colonial identity propose that colonizers develop a set of ideas about those they intend to control, and then define

themselves by reference to this “Other”, which they are not. However as colonial discourse theorists have pointed out, there is a paradox at the very heart of colonialism: although identities are fixed by the colonizer’s reference to the “Other”, yet the very nature of the interaction between colonizers and colonized means that the “Other” is itself constantly responding to, and being changed by, the definitions imposed by the colonizers. Consequently, despite the fixed “self” and “other” poles of this “master narrative”, neither colonized or colonizers really constitute a homogeneous group. They can be seen as heterogeneous not only in terms of their internal conflicts, but also because, for each, its very definition depends upon an “Other” (32).

“Colonial Discourse”, which has come to be used as the global, umbrella term for all discourses associated with the development of Western imperialism, may well be a misnomer. As Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman point out, the Marxist differentiation between colonialism and imperialism in fact reads imperialism as the global term, while colonialism designates a specific subset of imperialist practices:

[Marxist thinking] allows the most convincing distinctions between colonialism and imperialism to be drawn. In this view, colonialism, the conquest and direct control of other people’s land, is a particular phase in the history of imperialism, which is now best understood as the globalisation of the capitalist mode of production, its penetration of previously non-capitalist regions of the world, and destruction of pre- or non-capitalist forms of social organisation (Williams and Chrisman 2).

A more correct “umbrella” term would then seem to be “imperial discourse”. However, this would go against common usage, and against the example of writers such as Said and Bhabha. Alternatively, one might follow the conventional differentiation between the “colonial” and the citizen of the metropolis. This distinction indicates both the different identities of centre and periphery, and the conflicts of interests which often arose between them. Given this starting point, one might expect a differentiation between colonial discourse (discourses developed and employed primarily on the peripheries of empire) and imperial discourse (discourses developed in and highlighting the perspective of the metropolis). Here, however, such a use of “colonial” blurs the distinction between the settler colonies and those

colonies, such as India, where British colonials did not usually settle. It may also conceal the very real commonalities between colony and imperial metropole.

In the context of Southern Rhodesia, distinctions between the discourses of imperialism, colonialism and the settler state are not easily drawn, especially in the particular historical moment to which my study refers. While Southern Rhodesia was a British settler colony, and one might expect (local) colonial discourses to predominate, its colonisation also occurred at the time of what the British termed their “New Imperialism”, and this moment of extravagant imperialist rhetoric and sentiment set the tone of the patriotic discourses of the territory for several decades.¹ In addition, many Rhodesian “settlers” were transients who did not stay for long, and the majority came, not from Britain, but from South Africa.

As a general rule in this study, however, I use “imperial” when I wish to highlight the broadly metropolitan perspective, especially that of the “New Imperialism”. When I refer to “colonial”, I usually designate an imperialism localised in the Southern African periphery, and my use of “settler” refers to the gradual development of a separate bourgeois national identity in the Rhodesian discourses. An exception to this differentiation is my use of a capitalised “Colonial Discourse”, which I occasionally use to suggest the general “umbrella term” of Said and Bhabha, which describes the general linguistic system of binary oppositions expressed in all discourses of colonialism and imperialism. However, I do not wish to suggest, by differentiating between these terms, that any of these “discourses” can be clearly demarcated as having a separate identity or discrete discursive boundaries. I do however, wish to draw attention to what seem to me three important differences of emphasis within what could otherwise be rendered a meaninglessly generic field.

Besides Stoler's and Bhabha's perspectives, then, I have drawn heavily upon certain feminist perspectives which interpret the relation of gender to colonialism, especially those which investigate the position of European women within the colonial enterprise. Writers such as Gayatri Spivak, Jenny Sharpe, and Dorothy Driver have provided powerful analyses of the interrelations between white femininity, feminism, and imperialism.

Western Women and Imperialism

Gayatri Spivak's article "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" draws attention to the historical role of imperialism in the construction of the Western feminist subject's characteristic "feminist individualism" – as exemplified in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (244). Spivak rereads this "cult text of feminism" (244) to illustrate how Jane Eyre, as representative of Western feminism, achieves her "female access to individualism" by repeating the patterns of imperialism (246). On the one hand, Jane is constituted as individualist subject at the expense of the animalised Creole figure, Bertha Mason. On the other hand, Jane's access to subjectivity cannot be understood outside of the terms of the imperialist imperative to "make the heathen into a human" (248).

While Spivak notes the imperialist legacy within feminism, Jenny Sharpe identifies another link between the domain of Western femininity and the imperial project. Sharpe explains that that which Spivak terms "soul-making" (the "civilising" imperative of the colonial project) was in fact a specific, historical development halfway through the nineteenth century, which drew directly on notions of bourgeois femininity and domesticity to explain and justify British colonialism. At this point, a turn towards powerful domestic ideologies (which centred on "the moral value of the domestic woman") inaugurated a new rationale for colonialism and caused a radical

change in the way the British conceived of themselves and their colonial subjects (68).

To turn to the Southern African context, Dorothy Driver's investigation of the signification of "woman" reveals that, in the Southern Africa, the meaning of "white women" was ambivalent, and that white women themselves were both the objects and agents of imperialism. On the one hand, white women were objects of imperialism in that imperial patriarchal voices suggested women's emigration to the colonies as a solution to the historical "problem" of "surplus" women in Britain. For contemporary feminists the solution to this "problem" lay not in emigration, but in providing women with equal access to employment. In this disagreement, she finds a conflict between the imperialist and the feminist voice. She interprets the anxiety about "surplus" women (using post-Lacanian theory) as suggesting the explosive potential of feminine "excess" in nineteenth-century Britain. On the other hand, in relation to white women's agency, her article explains how the white woman as frontierswoman occasionally usurped the masculine phallic prerogatives of the coloniser. Then, by investigating a role where the white woman as useful object of imperialism was also an active agent, she finds a surprising connection between white women's positioning in their conventional feminine role as sentimental and sympathetic mediators between the races, and the patriarchal use of their reproductive and domestic functions in the effective separation and division of white and black. Both as mediators and as lines of division, then, white women occupied a contested "middle" position between the opposing binaries of culture and nature, white and black, and thus fulfilled the symbolic function of keeping these categories separate.

While Spivak finds the traces of imperialism within the Western feminist canon, this study illustrates that the redefinition of femininity within popular

feminism, was partially facilitated by the language and fictional genres of imperialism and racial "otherness". For instance, on the one hand, the popular image of the "new woman" borrows the language of imperial masculinity in order to establish its difference from previous definitions of domestic femininity, or the "proper lady" (to use Mary Poovey's term). On the other hand, I find that, as Driver points out, feminism was not simply a handmaiden to the master discourses of imperialism. Spivak's analysis does not really try to explain the fact that the "new woman" was not only defined in terms of her difference from figures of racial/cultural otherness such as Bertha Mason, but also came into being through the general cultural analogy between such figures and any form of "improper" femininity.

In undertaking projects which attempted to define and establish white colonial women's subjectivity, Stockley and Page, as writers, were themselves subject to the dictates of discourse. The definition of white women in Africa is intimately connected to both the discourses of British domesticity, and the British discourses about Africa. White women can stand for the forces of domesticity and home, and also as metaphors of sexual alterity. This dissertation investigates the way in which the "meanings" attached to white women can vary, often depending on the specific discursive context of the utterance. Such an investigation moves my study beyond the field of colonial discourse theory, and requires an account of the metropolitan novelistic tradition from which Stockley's and Page's romances arose. The discursive contexts of the novels I have studied originate primarily from what I term, on the one hand, the heroic, and on the other, the bourgeois tradition. The heroic tradition rejects domesticity and white femininity, and embraces the fascinating wilds of "Africa" in a sexualised allegory of conquest. The bourgeois tradition embraces domesticity and its ideals, and exports them, in order to "convert" the African continent, viewed as

degenerate and disgusting, or as object of a patronising sentiment. While it might be expected that white women, as writers, would have been primarily attracted to the bourgeois discourses, this dissertation explores the peculiar appeal of the heroic tradition for Page and Stockley, which I relate to the influences upon their work of the cultural context of 1890s London.

Literary History and the Romance

My study of Stockley and Page investigates the interplay of sub-genres and discourses within their texts. To understand the particular generic choices made in their fiction, it is necessary to understand the particular patterns and meanings which had developed within the novel genre by the end of the nineteenth century, when Stockley and Page began their novelistic careers. This does not entail a mere awareness of the range of generic options open to them, within the novel tradition, but also an understanding of the relationship between generic patterns, and their gendered and political historical context. This chapter outlines some of the major forces at play within the novel at the time Stockley and Page were writing. My study investigates the interrelations between discourses of imperialism, nationalism, gender and sexuality in the novels, as they gravitate towards and away from the domestic and heroic extremes of the genre.²

It is common to speak of popular novels for women readers, such as the love stories written by Stockley and Page, as “romances”. The use of this term, however, has become common only as the result of a complex process of generic change. The term “romance” originates with the Arthurian romances of the late Middle Ages, where “[l]ove interest and the pursuit of adventures” displaced an earlier form, the heroic epic, which expressed a preoccupation with feudal warfare (Eugene Vinaver 1971:1). The elaborate interlace design of the chivalric romance in turn gave way to the novel, with its comparative “singleness of theme” and “simplicity of narrative

design” (Vinaver 97). However, according to Vinaver, an “undisciplined trend” within the romance was passed on to the novel, which explains the vagueness of the term romance as it is currently employed - it can now be used to suggest a wide range of non-realistic tendencies in fiction:

[“Romance” in the modern English sense], according to W.P. Ker, “means almost everything – from the two horsemen riding together at the beginning of the historical novel, or from the pasteboard Moors of the puppet-show to the spell of the enchanted ground, the music of dreams and shadows” (94).

The initial rise of the novel is often attributed to the economic changes which gave rise to capitalism in Western Europe. The major thesis of Ian Watt’s The Rise of the Novel is that the construction of individualism within the novel form was intrinsically related to the Puritan ethic and to the economic individualism associated with the rise of capitalism. However, feminists have emphasised that Watt’s perspective ignores not only the characteristically domestic plots, and feminine authorship, and audience of the novel, but also the crucial role played by gender in the economic and historical circumstances which gave rise to the novel. Thus, for Nancy Armstrong, in Watt’s study, “history is represented as the history of male institutions” (7).

More recently, in studies of the history of the novel, attention has shifted from Watt’s narrowly economic focus to different perspectives which attempt to explain the role of gender and sexuality in the novel. Leslie Fiedler has analysed the divergence of the genre into subgenres, which focus on either the “love interest” theme (the domestic, bourgeois or sentimental romance) or the “pursuit of adventure” theme (the heroic romance), and which are perceived to be written with either a feminine or a masculine audience in mind respectively. Feminist theorists, such as Nancy Armstrong, Ann Douglas, and Jane Tompkins have all evaluated the role of

sentiment and domestic ideology in the history of the novel, although their analyses demonstrate a wide range of ideological and theoretical allegiances.

Leslie Fiedler

Leslie Fiedler, writing from a psycho-analytic perspective, in his study Love and Death in the American Novel assumes that the centre and origin of the novel form is a concern with sexual passion. As a result, he not only sees a “rejection or fear of sexuality” (24) as the defining moment of American fiction.

The “sentimentalizing taste of the eighteenth century”, according to Fiedler, produced the novel form as epitomised by Richardson’s Clarissa (25). For Fiedler, this ascendancy of sentiment (which he aligns with its more romantic version, “sensibility”) led to the subsequent reign of the novel over the bourgeois classes. In America, the domestic and sentimental romances became more powerful even than Protestantism in their cultural influence. Fiedler claims that they constituted the “secret scriptures” of a bourgeois “Sentimental Love Religion”, enshrining their heroines as “Protestant Virgins”, and redefining all morality “in terms of sexual purity” (45-6,71). In this context, his study investigates (from Freudian and Jungian perspectives) the canonical American novelistic tradition which rejects the bourgeois domestic mode of the sentimental novel. He finds in the peculiarly “masculine” canon a significant absence of any Richardsonian construction of sexual passion (sentiment/sensibility) as the central concern of the novel:

The typical male protagonist of our fiction has been a man on the run, harried into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat – anywhere to avoid “civilization”, which is to say, the confrontation of a man and woman, which leads to the fall to sex, marriage, and responsibility (26)

For Fiedler, American novels, lacking the “essential Richardsonian conflict” (the battle between aristocracy and bourgeoisie in the boudoir), and forbidden any mention of sex by American Protestant codes of gentility, were incapable of creating

adequate female characters. As a result, in American fiction, he claims, the heroine is “a dull and embarrassing figure, a monster of virtue”, whom major (male) authors such as Cooper, Hawthorne, Twain and Melville have understandably avoided. Instead the American heroes of many such novels desperately flee the feminine domain, seeking instead the heroic romance of adventure (75-6).

Fiedler’s appraisal of canonical and non-canonical works divides the American novelistic tradition into three major sub-genres. The first, the genteel bourgeois novel of sentiment, dominated by “scribbling ladies”, is expurgated and, according to Fiedler, “degraded” in comparison to its Richardsonian prototype. In this genteel incarnation, the death of the sentimentalised heroine replaces her seduction as a source of titillation, and the clash between a predatory masculinity and a persecuted femininity replaces the clash between healthy bourgeois and decadent aristocratic values to be found in European novels (84-87). The second subgenre, the American gothic novel, is in fact a rewriting of the domestic novel, which, however, allows the sexuality and violence repressed from the conventional novel to return. The gothic, claims Fiedler, is “fundamentally anti-bourgeois” in its recognition of “the spiritual isolation of the individual in a society where all communal systems of value have collapsed or have been turned into meaningless clichés” (127-128). In the European gothic, the deviant sexuality and cruelty forbidden by bourgeois domesticity are represented within the degenerate aristocracy. However, in America, the gothic, while still domestic in focus, undergoes a major transformation from its European roots:

In the American gothic ... the heathen, unredeemed wilderness and not the decaying monuments of a dying class, nature and not society becomes the symbol of evil. Similarly, not the aristocrat but the Indian, not the dandified courtier but the savage colored man is postulated as the embodiment of villainy. (Fiedler 160)

Third, the “heroic” historical romance, following the novels of Sir Walter Scott, is, according to Fiedler, the “cleanest” American sub-genre, in its “self-conscious attempt to redeem fiction at once for respectability and masculinity” (170). As such, authors such as James Fenimore Cooper have been institutionalised as writers of “boys’ fiction”:

All these books ... have male protagonists, adult or juvenile; all involve adventure and isolation plus an escape at one point or another, or a flight from society to an island, a woods, the underworld, a mountain fastness – some place at least where mothers do not come; most all of them involve, too, a male companion, who is the spirit of the alien place, and who is presented with varying degrees of ambiguity as helpmate and threat (192).

Cooper’s heroic historical romances created two figures with almost mythical power over the American imagination: the archetypal hunter Natty Bumppo, the “enemy of cities”, and the noble savage, Chingachgook, “nature’s nobleman and Vanishing American”, who together naturalised the “Rousseauistic myth” in America (Fiedler 192,196).

Ann Douglas and Jane Tompkins

Fiedler’s interpretation dwells on the imaginative inadequacy and sterility of the sentimentalised feminine characters and plots of the genteel American novel. Ann Douglas contextualises such fictional elements by placing them within what she sees as a social movement which resulted in the “feminization” of American culture, and identifies “the drive of nineteenth-century American women to gain power through the exploitation of their feminine identity as their society defined it” (8). However, in a judgement similar to that of Fiedler, Douglas’s assessment of this “feminizing” movement as a whole is negative – she reads it as a betrayal of intellectual and religious vigour, and as a self-indulgently emotional entrenchment of intellectually undemanding and inferior values.

Another, less negative feminist assessment reverses this judgement. For Jane Tompkins, “the popular domestic novel of the nineteenth century represents a monumental effort to reorganize culture from the woman’s point of view” by expressing a belief in social redemption through sentimental values – “salvation through motherly love” (83). According to Tompkins’ revision, the result of the expression of these beliefs by a number of best-selling women writers was the construction of a myth “that gave women the central position of power and authority in the culture” (83).

Nancy Armstrong

Nancy Armstrong, although focusing on the rise of the English, rather than the American novel, presents a Foucauldian analysis of exactly that feminine power and authority which, according to Tompkins, lay at the heart of the redemptive mission of the American novel of sentiment. For Tompkins, the sentimental and domestic focus of the novels presents a powerful alternative to patriarchal capitalism – a redemptive feminine politics of the meek. However, Armstrong, as a Foucauldian, is less optimistic about the redemptive potential of this alternative form of power, and provides an entirely different explanation of its origins. She attempts to explain, in broad political terms, why the (English) novel is dominated by the “language of sexual relations” (3). Unlike Fiedler, she does not interpret this domination as a mark of the psychological forces lying at the origin of the novel, but sees it rather as a result of the rise of “a new form of political power” – that of the “domestic woman”, which “not only revised the way in which an individual's identity could be understood, but in presuming to discover what was only natural in the self, ... also removed subjective experience and sexual practices from their place in history” (3,9). While Fiedler’s study identified the concealed originating forces of the American novel as sexual in

nature, Armstrong considers “political history”, rather than “sexuality” to be the key to understanding the novel genre in England – for Armstrong, that which Fiedler would understand in terms of the “forces” of sexuality is in fact a displacement of political forces. For Fiedler, American male heroes flee uninspiring feminine sentimentality, and evade the forces of their own sexuality. For Armstrong, the domestic realm of sentiment is a field of powers concentrated in the domestic woman, and psycho-analytic readings of sexuality such as Fiedler’s are merely this powerful domestic woman’s youngest offspring.

For Armstrong, the new political power of the domestic woman marked a transition from aristocratic to bourgeois power – a “transition from a government of families to a government through the family” (Jacques Donzelot qtd. in Armstrong 18). Seen from this perspective, the domestic woman, while intrinsically a political and historical phenomenon, wields power precisely by dehistoricising and depoliticising both desire and domesticity. Armstrong points out that the most influential modern heir to this mode of representing the self is psychoanalysis, which is part of a more general “tradition of thinking that sees modern sexuality as logically prior to its written representation” (11).

Armstrong’s discussion rests upon the crucial notion of a discursively produced “sexual contract”, which delineated male and female domains, the public and the private spheres, in terms of a “sexual exchange” (40) whereby “the female relinquishes political control to the male in order to acquire exclusive authority over domestic life, emotions, taste, and morality” (41). In the context of this “sexual contract”, Armstrong’s history of the novel outlines “the process by which novels rose to a position of respectability among the genres of writing” (98). In the process, novels, together with other genres such as conduct books, contributed substantially to

the realisation of “a private domain of culture that was independent of the political world and overseen by a woman” (98).

Armstrong traces a historical shift in emphasis as the novel first, through Richardson and Austen, attempts to broaden the “social base” of traditional authority by symbolically marrying the middle classes into the upper classes, with the upper classes retaining overall power through the sexual contract’s initial bias towards the (aristocratic) male. However, later novels, after the mid-nineteenth century, such as those written by Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot and the Brontës, “stress the disruptive effects of any redistribution of authority” (53) since by this stage, “a contractual exchange empowers the female at the expense of exhausting the male” and political resistance becomes redefined as “individual pathology” (55,252).

Through this process, claims Armstrong, novelists shared an unspoken understanding of their genre which dictated that “novels were supposed to rewrite political history as personal histories that elaborated on the courtship procedures ensuring a happy domestic life” (38). As a result, neither the “more masculine fiction of Fielding and [Sir Walter] Scott” nor the “domestic fiction of Fielding and Austen” defied the rule that “novels ultimately seemed to steer clear of politics” (38). Avoiding mention of political language or ideological motivations, the novel instead “produced a language of increasing psychological complexity for understanding individual behavior” (1987:253). For Armstrong then, the origins of the novel are “political”, while its major textual effect is to conceal these political motivations.

Armstrong’s analysis provides an intriguing new perspective on Fiedler’s insights, which can provide a powerful explanation for the differences of emphasis within the two major subgenres of the novelistic tradition – the heroic romance and the domestic romance. The heroic masculine tradition, which shuns domesticity,

femininity and sexuality can be read as a response to the power of the bourgeois domestic woman. To establish a heroic masculine identity within a genre controlled by domesticity and femininity, it is necessary to leave the spaces of feminine influence and power. As David Bunn has shown, a similar motivation governs the return to heroic romance in the imperialist romances of Haggard (7-8). For the purposes of this study, then, the bourgeois domestic romance refers to the English and American novelistic tradition discussed by Armstrong and Douglas, which establish the power of the domestic woman and of sentiment. The term "heroic romance" will be used to refer to the masculine quests made legendary by Scott, Cooper and also to Haggard's combination of the heroic romance and the American gothic in the Southern African context.

An understanding of both sub-genres is crucial in reading the novels by Page and Stockley, as is an awareness of the popular and polemical fiction written by, for and about women in the 1890s. However, Armstrong does not consider popular fiction in her study. Nonetheless, by applying Armstrong's analysis to women's history in the 1890s, a new perspective on the events of this period can be constructed. Two issues, in particular, suggest themselves. First, in the course of this decade, the middle class, domestic woman was slowly entering into previously forbidden fields of activity, such as political activism, employment, and education, by defining them as extensions of her feminine calling. As Jane Lewis points out, one of the major arguments of the nineteenth-century feminists was that "women's domestic talents and virtues should be extended to the wider sphere beyond the home", and "women's domestic virtues comprised an important part of most feminists' argument for the vote"(88). Second, the terms of the sexual contract and of bourgeois marriage were thrown open to be dissected, debated and sometimes dismembered by feminist

writers and activists (e.g. Charlotte Brontë, Mona Caird, Josephine Butler) – in ways which were often overtly political, and which began to break down the divide between personal and political which had gradually been established through the domestic fiction of the previous two centuries.

Late Victorian and Early Edwardian Popular Fiction for Women

A consideration of the literary and generic context of the novels of Stockley and Page must include an awareness of the developments in women's popular fiction at the turn of the century. The sensation novel of the 1860s, the "new woman" novel of the 1890s, and the new publishing category of "girls' fiction" all brought about important changes in the literary landscape, particularly for popular women writers. As Lyn Pykett points out, the sensation novel and the "new woman" novel both spawned public discussion, controversy and furious imitation: "[t]hey were widely read, heatedly discussed in the newspaper and periodical press, imitated, parodied and, in some cases, adapted for the stage" (xi).

The Novel of Sensation

Pykett places the sensation novel of the 1860s in the historical context of contemporary debates about prostitution and divorce, the associated "moral panic" resulting from anxieties about both men's and women's sexuality, about the institution of marriage, and about "immorality as a pervasive social fact" (62). For Pykett, sensation fiction, like the working-class form of Victorian melodrama, characteristically displaces "anxieties about social and political issues into intersubjective dramas focused on the family" (75). This suggests a similar evasion of politics to that observed in the middle-class domestic fiction by Armstrong. Sensation novelists such as Mary Braddon, Mrs Henry Wood, and Rhoda Broughton who responded to this "panic over the instability of established gender norms and

categories” (Pykett 67) created powerful fantasies centred around the uneasy definition of femininity in their heroines, who often ambiguously combined the qualities of both angel and whore, predator and victim. The sensation writers also moved beyond the romantic convention of marriage as the happy ending of narrative by focusing on unhappily married heroines, and by presenting “a satirical treatment of the marriage market in its focusing on the situation of the purchased wife” (Pykett 65).

The sensation novel is a development of the gothic sub-genre. However, the sensation novel replaces the male gothic villain with an ambivalently presented heroine/villainess, who becomes the source of upheaval in the plot. As in the gothic form, the sensation novel constructs the domestic space as the “locus of passion, deception, violence and crime” (Pykett 74). Pykett concludes that “the shifting and disputed category of the feminine” is at the centre of sensation fiction’s appeal, and constitutes the origin of its narrative, which allows the return of the repressed “improper feminine” into the spaces of domestic propriety (83). Whether the “improper feminine” “returns” in sensation fiction (viewed in terms of a psycho-analytic model) as an actual force “repressed in and by the social construction of the proper feminine” (Pykett 83) or whether its surfacing should also, in a Foucauldian manner, be seen to be governed by particular discursive patterns is a question addressed in the final chapter of this dissertation, which considers Stockley’s adoption of images of improper femininity from the sensation novel and from the heroic romance. Suffice it to say, however, that Page’s preference for the conventional domestic definition of woman as a morally superior being meant that her romances generally preferred not to depict serious feminine impropriety, and certainly did not represent it as a powerful, irrepressible “force”.

The “New Woman” Novels

The moral panic of the 1860s which gave rise to the sensation novel developed during the 1890s into a feeling that there was a “crisis” of gender identities and sexual politics in Britain (Elaine Showalter Sexual Anarchy, Lyn Pykett). This crisis was particularly apparent in the London literary scene during this decade – a period when both Stockley and Page lived in London briefly. Translations of Ibsen and Zola and the activism of the first generation of British feminists ushered in a fin de siècle which, as Gail Cunningham points out, was both “a period in which everything could be challenged, a time of enthusiastic extremism and gleeful revolt” and also a time “of deeply serious inquiry, of impassioned debate over central questions of moral and social behaviour which created acute anxiety in those who felt themselves to be witnessing the breakdown of the rules traditionally thought to hold society together” (1). Thus, a combination of anxiety about, and social demand for change found its focal point in issues of gender and sexuality, and was embodied in, on the one hand, the figure of the “New Woman”, and, on the other, the figure of Oscar Wilde, the “decadent” aesthete.

Feminist writers emphasise that the “new woman” came into being as a complex, and often contradictory, representation.³ As an image and textual construct, she symbolised rebellion and disorder, and, surrounded by an aura of “moral panic”, was “actively produced and reproduced in the pages of the newspaper and periodical press, as well as in novels” (Pykett 137-8). As both a “body and a fashion system”, she “violated the code of the proper feminine” (Pykett 138). Presented as hysterically hyperfeminine and inappropriately masculine by turns, both of her incarnations “challenged traditional gender boundaries”, albeit in contradictory ways (Pykett 141-2). This challenge was viewed by both her enemies and defenders as having a significant effect on British national identity and destiny. As a signifier she was used to represent either an optimistic

or a pessimistic view of Britain's future prospects – depending on the perspective of the author, she could be either “a beacon of progress” or a “beast of regression” (Pykett 139). Most importantly, the many contradictions within Victorian discourses on femininity were concentrated in her as signifier, and as Pykett points out, these contradictions were reproduced, exposed, challenged, and transformed in the fiction centred around her – commonly referred to as the “new woman” novels of the 1890s.

The “new woman” novelists, while retaining the domestic focus of the novel, politicised the power relations which governed the domestic space by challenging conventional interpretations of love, marriage and motherhood for women. As Gail Cunningham points out:

In portraying marital breakdown, adultery, free love or bachelor motherhood unaccompanied by the approved moral retribution – or indeed heavily supported by an impassioned moral defence – these novels were ruthlessly hacking away the foundations of idealised femininity on which much of the Victorian moral structure was built. More or less overtly they were broadcasting the ideas of the New Woman, and an avid public hung on their every word, eager to be either loftily inspired or deliciously shocked (19).

However, these novels also ritualised the impossibility of women sustaining such unconventional lifestyles in a hostile society, by incorporating within their narratives the price which the “new women” paid for such emancipation – “mental breakdown, madness and suicide” (Cunningham 4) – fates also beloved of the decadents of the period. Cunningham identifies two schools of writing among the “new woman” novelists. The first, ironically termed the “purity school”, retained the Victorian notion of woman as a morally superior being occupying her own sphere (an interesting variant of the sexual contract), but, significantly, the “purity” they sought for their heroines was transformed into a notion which conflicted directly with the conventional notion of woman's “purity”. For novelists such as Sarah Grand, Iota, and Grant Allen,

purity could derive only from knowledge, and possibly experience, of the world's blighting miseries, and if a few feverish joys could be picked up along

the way, so much the better. Theirs was the purity of truth, personal integrity and freedom, and inevitably brought them into head-on collision with social convention. (Cunningham 71)

The other “school” identified by Cunningham includes a more diverse group of writers (George Egerton, Emma Frances Brooke, Mona Caird and M^énie Muriel Dowie), who were referred to in their time as the “neurotic” school. According to Cunningham, “their feminism was of a more radical kind, they placed greater emphasis on sexual freedom for women and were far less concerned with establishing an ideal of femininity” (51).

While assessments of sensational fiction and the “new woman” fiction tend to focus on issues of gender, it is clear, to some extent, from Pykett’s argument, that the debates and discourses on gender which manifested themselves in the fiction were often formulated in terms of assumptions about Britain’s imperial role, and British national identity as negotiated within Colonial Discourse. Conversely, the idea of Britain’s imperial role and identity was itself informed by changing definitions of femininity and the feminine sphere. As Ann Stoler has convincingly shown, the discourses of bourgeois imperialism and of sexuality and gender did not, in fact, comprise two distinct discussions, but often shared the same vocabulary, and, crucially, relied upon one another for mutual affirmation.

Lyn Pykett shows how, in the 1860s, Lynne Linton’s naming, in the Saturday Review, of the “Girl of the Period” (often referred to as the GOP) reflected many of the anxieties also expressed in the sensation novels of that decade (69-72). Linton’s fiercely conservative polemics contrast an ideal figure of British femininity with her opposite – the “GOP” – a travesty of the ideal, and a caricatured vision of feminine impropriety. Pykett reveals the fascinating way in which Linton’s polarity is constructed using a nationalist argument. This observation can be taken further, and provides a good starting

point for an exploration of the conversation conducted between discourses of gender and of imperialism.

As Pykett shows, Linton's feminine norm is based on a "nationalistic vision of a fair young English girl" whose Englishness consists primarily in her embodying the essence of womanhood, "the most essentially womanly [woman] in the world" (Linton qtd. in Pykett 70). This vision finds its substance primarily in negatives. Non-existent in Linton's England, she is recalled nostalgically "as a race memory" which will one day, in a healthier society, be resurrected (Pykett 70). Her virtues are domestic ones – the purity and dignity of the unostentatious wife, mother and home-maker, enshrined in the tranquility of the protected domestic zone. Fascinatingly, however, these qualities must also be defined in terms of nationalist stereotypes. Linton sketches her as a hybrid, defined against, but also in terms of, the deviant womanhood of other nations:

a creature generous, capable and modest ... franker than a French-woman, more to be trusted than an Italian, as brave as an American but more refined, as domestic as a German and more graceful (qtd in Pykett 70).

This hybrid womanhood is protected from the conventionally "feminine" qualities of deceit and dissimulation by transposing them onto the French and Italian national identities. In her frankness and trustworthiness, and in her "American" bravery she conforms to the Christian masculine ideal under construction in Britain at that time. However, it is necessary to imbue her also with "refinement" in order to avoid the suggestion of any "mannish" impropriety. Even her vaunted domesticity must be qualified as "graceful" (possibly in order to avoid any implications of coarse, lower-class domesticity). This image conveys a dual message. First, it implies, women of all other nations are the caricatured embodiment of a particular feminine quality. Whether a positive or negative quality, it remains deviant because excessive. Second, while implying that the British national identity contains the epitome of true

womanhood, it also reveals clearly the absence on which this “essence” is founded – nothing remains after the subtraction of the qualities of British masculinity, on the one hand, and of “foreign” femininity on the other.

Pykett shows that, behind Linton’s desire to “fix the category of the feminine” there lies a fear that, as an acted role, femininity cannot be fixed or made to fit a single definition (71). Linton’s fear leads her to “make feminine multiplicity appear deviant” as she attempts to halt the extending reach of the domestic woman into new spheres of activity - she condemns not only the “Bluestocking, Poetess, or the ‘mannish woman’”, but also more conventionally feminine roles such as “the ‘antiseptic’ role of ‘spiritual beadledom’”, and the role of “self-consciously staged ‘intensive womanliness’” (qtd. in Pykett 71).

Linton’s nightmare of deviant femininity is equally interesting. As Pykett points out, Linton’s ‘GOP’, like the heroine of the sensation novel, was an expression of the fear “that women are inherently duplicitous; that femininity implies and involves acting: and that women are primitives, savages, hysterics, or whores” (1992:69). For Linton, then, varieties of nonconformist femininity are understood in terms of racial degeneration, madness, and malaise.

Although, thirty years later, Linton’s perspective was emphatically rejected in the “new woman” fiction, the moral stance of some “new woman” writers displayed remarkable continuities with the imperatives of domestic ideology, which placed women in an elevated, separated sphere, while they both overturned and reinforced some of the assumptions of imperialism. Most notably, this can be seen in the “new woman” writers’ reversal of the gendered (and, sometimes, racial) hierarchies of Social Darwinist thinking, which conventionally ranked men higher on the evolutionary scale than women.

While the “new woman” fiction made explicit much of the social protest implied by the sensation novel, the arch-villain of the “new woman” writers was male rather than female. In an overturning of the gendered hierarchy within the evolutionary thinking of Darwin and Spencer, “the deadly syphilitic male”, (invested with the seed of national degeneration) was thoroughly villainised (Pykett 154). In the novels of Sarah Grand, for instance, “the male of the species was figured as less highly evolved than the female, and hence closer to brute nature” (Pykett 155). On the other hand, “woman, as the more highly evolved form, was held to be more civilised and hence more closely associated with the cultural domain than man” (Pykett 155). Even “natural” functions such as maternity and sexuality, by association with this pure femininity, acquire an aura of high spirituality. Assumptions such as these underlie many of the 1890s feminist calls for women’s participation in the public sphere. Armstrong’s history of domestic fiction allows us to see this overturning of the evolutionary hierarchy between genders, and the participation of women in the public sphere, in terms of the gradual strengthening of the power of the domestic woman within British culture – the domestic ideal prevails, and women remain “domestic”, despite other changes.

As the domestic woman extended her claims to territory beyond the home, a dual transformation occurred. On the one hand, she “domesticated” new realms of human experience. What was previously the public sphere, a realm beyond her influence, gradually becomes subject to the imperatives of domestic ideology. One can see this in the British purity campaigns, in American novels such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and in the changing emphasis of British imperial policy in India and Africa, which became governed by domestic ideology in Sharpe’s analysis. On the other hand, Linton’s unitary image of “the ideal woman” splits into a myriad of new, often contrasting, incarnations – heroines of the “new woman” fiction and, especially, of the “new girls” fiction are

individuated in new ways, according to their experiences in the public sphere, although all, in the final analysis, are understood in terms of domestic ideology.

The villainisation of men and idealisation of women is characteristic of what Cunningham calls the “purity” school of “new woman” writing. Nonetheless, according to Cunningham, the “neurotic” school was engaged in a similar overturning of the gendered hierarchies of evolution. Instead of viewing the “female” as a degenerate and less highly evolved version of the “male”, the neurotic school valorised those “feminine” qualities, such as savage passion, wildness and physicality, which were previously excluded from discourses of domesticity and which were also negative signifiers in certain discourses of imperialism. In this way, the realm of women’s sexuality, previously constructed by Victorians primarily through respectable medical and bureaucratic discourses, assumed, in women’s popular fiction, a language provided by the fledgling ‘sciences’ of psycho-analysis and anthropology, and which was familiar from descriptions of racial ‘otherness’. These discourses, slanted through a romantic primitivist lens, allowed for positive depictions of feminine sexual desire.

George Egerton, a writer from the “neurotic” school, provides a particularly clear example of this primitivism in her story, “The Cross Line”. In this story, the negative terms of the colonial hierarchies shift to assume a strikingly ambivalent meaning, as the central character explores “the eternal wildness, the untamed primitive savage temperament that lurks in the mildest, best woman” (60). Egerton explicitly links this “eternal wildness” in women to their passions – both emotional and sexual:

You see there is no time of sowing wild oats for women; we repress, and repress, and then some day we stumble on the man who just satisfies our sexual and emotional nature, and then there is shipwreck of some sort (60).

These comments, which caused great controversy at the time of publication, are framed in the story by Egerton’s frequent use of Orientalist motifs in her attempt to

articulate a femininity “other” to the domestic norm. The central character, significantly named “Gipsy”, identifies with Cleopatra and Salome in her sexual fantasies.

A different “new woman” interpretation of feminine sexuality which is, however, also inflected by the imperatives of empire is discernible in M^énie Muriel Dowie’s *Gallia*, in which the heroine chooses both her husband and her vocation of motherhood “eugenically” (Pykett 152).

While both Stockley and Page were influenced by the metropolitan trend of the “new woman” writing, they responded to these influences rather differently. Stockley’s novels incorporate the ambivalence about femininity and domesticity characteristic of the sensation novel. In her romantic construction of her images of her heroines’ feminine sexuality as a powerful and positive “primitive” force she is more closely aligned with the “neurotic” school of “new woman” writers. Page, with her love for polemic, idealisation of women, and preference for male villains, is closer to the “purity” school.

Just as the depiction of the “new woman’s” feminine sexuality in Britain was built around positive (neurotic) and negative (purity) discourses of the racial “other”, so the “new woman’s” national identity was built in conversation with existing discourses of imperial masculinity. What distinguishes Stockley and Page from the metropolitan “new woman” writers is their attraction to the heroic discourses of imperial masculinity and to powerful fantasies of escape from the domestic realm, as popularised by male authors such as Kipling and Haggard. Stockley and Page were not alone in this fascination, as is apparent in the popular fiction written for girls at the turn of the century and discussed in Sally Mitchell’s study, *The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England: 1880-1915*.

The “New Girl”

Mitchell details the development of a “girls’ culture” which came into being in England at the turn of the nineteenth century, when, for the first time, the category “girl” became a social and cultural reality distinct from both “child” and “woman”. Closely associated with this informal culture existed a commercial culture industry aimed at girls – as indicated by the new publishing category of “Books for Girls” and by the range of periodicals aimed at an audience consisting of girls (including the Girls’ Own Paper – for which Page wrote before her departure from England). During this time, the introduction of schooling for girls and the fictional depiction of girls’ education and women’s employment distanced young girls (if not in fact then at least in imagination) from their traditional apprenticeship to their mothers within the domestic sphere, and, as a result, “the old ‘female culture’ began to disintegrate” (Mitchell 18).

“Books for Girls”, as a genre, states Mitchell, included:

school stories and tales of heroic action in the Indian Mutiny or the Boer War, holiday adventures that showed girls on their own in dangerous places, career books featuring young artists and nurses and typists in detective firms, and tales about young teens who sold papers on the streets or ran away to join the circus (Mitchell 1).

The “new girl” had her origin in and herself gave rise to “changing ideals and new roles for adult women” (102). Much of the fiction written for the “new girl” was modelled on boys’ favourite reading matter – historical tales and adventure stories. The new girls’ fiction substituted girl heroines for boy heroes, and expressed the common fantasy of girls who wanted to be boys. These stories helped to create a positive meaning for the word “tomboy” – which at this time shifted away from its originally disapproving synonymy with “hoyden” (Mitchell 104).⁴ The mid-Victorian domestic ideal for little girls had required them to be “neat, clean, gentle and obedient”. Anything else signified a warning to readers of “a moral flaw”. However, by the Edwardian years, girls’ fiction conventionally depicts “untidiness and careless

dress” when presenting its positive characters, who are “jolly, wholesome and active” (Mitchell 131). By then, the previous exclusively domestic ideal for girls no longer held exclusive currency. For tomboyish girls, masculinity was a coveted signifier:

Masculinity provided physical and geographical freedom: nonobstructive clothing, an athletic body, safe passage through public spaces that men made dangerous for those who wore skirts. Boys of the middle and upper classes were trained for the robust assurance and social privilege of imperial rule. The only way to envision and practice becoming a competent and complete adult seemed to lie in boyhood; prevailing gender codes barred the young lady from even imagining independence and risk. (105).

While the “mannish new woman” of the period was roundly abused and caricatured because her masculinised body, mind and manners were perceived to be grotesquely improper, the gendered ideals of boyishness were, during this period, less controversially within reach of girls. Mitchell shows that the boyish virtues were “deliberately enlisted to train girls for ‘manhood’ and (ultimately) citizenship” (105). A certain flexibility of gender categories during this period initially allowed women writers to place girl heroines into the plots and settings of boys’ tales. According to Mitchell, the meanings of the terms “girl” and “boy” were both in a state of flux and were “marked by shifts and recuperations” (104).

Before the 1890s, an “androgynous model of Christian boyhood” allowed for a great flexibility in gender definitions – leading to a “gender slippage between boyish girls and girlish boys” (Mitchell 113). Later, however, partly “because girls’ diminishing athletic and educational difference challenged male supremacy” British masculinity was redefined under pressure from eugenicist fears of national “degeneration” (Mitchell 114).

In this context, Gail Ching-Liang Low points out that a paranoid vision of Britain as an “imperilled island” was produced, for the British political Right, as a result of “the Irish question, a growing trade unionism and a more militant women’s

movement” (15). The rhetoric of racial degeneration which arose to account for these social fractures transformed “anxiety over the nation’s development and defence” into “a question of healthy and unhealthy bodies” (Low 17). Consequently, British manhood required redefinition as a more physically virile ideal. New models of masculinity were constructed, based on the muscular male body, and on borrowings from the perceived masculinity of Britain’s colonised subjects. Authors such as Charles Kingsley and H. Rider Haggard were instrumental in this regard. Kingsley’s fiction depicted a “muscular Christianity”, which “moralised on the disciplined male body” and enshrined the virtues of “daring, endurance, self-restraint and honour” (Low 19). Haggard’s fiction modelled his “heroic cult of English masculinity” on the masculinity of one of England’s favourite racial “others” – “the romanticised image of Zulu politics and military prowess, that is available through the metaphor of the colonial mimesis of savagery” (Low 7). However, Low also points out that a perpetual boyish innocence is central to the power of this new definition of masculinity. The figure of the boy in Haggard’s fiction, she claims, helped establish a fantasy of imperial innocence for Britain where “because childhood presents a world of innocence uncorrupted by age and civilisation ... the boy child is necessarily the only figure capable of inheriting or founding, this blank new (colonial) world” (45). The new imperial masculinity also, crucially, required testing and proving in the colonial setting. Ironically, explains Mitchell, this heightening of manliness in fact made it easier for girls to identify with the heroes of boys’ stories (such as those written by G.A. Henty), because in them, “[f]emale characters virtually disappeared” and “[n]o distracting feminine characters remind girls of their place in the world, and no romance requires her suddenly to switch from subject to object role” (114).

Mitchell points out that the extremes of boyishness in the heroines of girls' adventure stories, with their "heartily boyish hero[ines]" did not fit comfortably into "contemporary England" – they required a "wilder" setting, distanced either in space or time. (An equivalent pattern is also apparent in boys' fiction.) Only "[i]n wilder places, or in wilder times" could girls "reveal heroism without qualification – though they may still need gentling at the end" (115). As a result many of the more adventurous tales, such as those by Bessie Marchant ("often described as 'the girls' Henty'") "almost always set [their] tales in the wilds of empire or in exciting foreign places where laws of modesty and decorum did not obtain" (116). Most interestingly for this study, however, Mitchell's discussion points out that Marchant's adventurous, boyish girls were able to retain their androgynous qualities and unconventional lifestyles as long as they did not, in fact, grow up. The stories end without the heroine discovering "a way for her boyish virtues to be maintained in a woman's life" (117). This poses a crucial problem for Stockley and Page to solve in their novels, where the bourgeois romance and the adventurous colonial setting constitute opposing forces in the battle to decide what the "new girls" look like when they do, in fact, finally grow up.

These changes in the definition of femininity held enormous implications for the domestic sphere and for the power of the domestic women, as, in its traditional definition, the domestic realm could no longer claim to represent the sole and highest pinnacle of girls' desires. The unitary domestic ideal – Linton's "fair young English girl" (Linton qtd. in Pykett 70) splinters into a range of equally acceptable options for femininity. Mitchell quotes an Amy Barnard, who, praises "the home girl, the athletic girl, the musical girl, the teacher, the artist, the student, the writer, the society girl, the business girl" (175). As Mitchell points out, the domestic ideal of 'the home girl' no longer reigns unchallenged. In fact, Barnard bolsters the appeal of a domestic role by

associating it with imperial adventure – the ‘home girl’ embodies women’s role in the imperial project: “[the home girl] is the type most needed in Australia, Canada, and the outposts of empire” (175).

Mitchell outlines the gradual decline of this girls’ culture, relating it to the “regendering” and reestablishment of separate gendered spheres that followed the First World War. She relates this to a clearer demarcation of the cultural limits of childhood and femininity, noting the “sexualisation” of girlhood through the figure of the teenaged “flapper”, and the introduction of compulsory sex-segregated schooling until the age of fourteen (177-188). Romance became the preferred form of reading for teenaged girls, and the boyish virtues of strength and bravery became viewed eugenically – they were primarily useful to girls as “a preparation for maternity”(185). This shift, as the market turned from adventure to romance, leaves traces on Page’s and Stockley’s narratives, which are often the stories of new girls who do, in fact, grow up, and who learn to regard romance, marriage and imperial motherhood as the greatest adventure of all.

Conclusion

The imperial project cannot be adequately summarised in terms of the simple “reinvention of the patriarch” which Anne McClintock finds in her study of Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*. McClintock uses this text to exemplify the “governing themes of Western Imperialism” (1). Haggard’s text, claims McClintock, is “an elaborate, paranoid effort to ward off the frightful melding of mother, working-class domestic servant and black woman through a narrative disciplining of female reproductive power”(246). Consequently, from her perspective, the narrative amounts to a “phantasmic narrative of white patriarchal regeneration”(248). McClintock’s analysis of the historical and biographical context of Haggard’s narrative is

compelling, but her psycho-analytic perspective tends to reduce the complexity of gendered discourse in the text to “contradictions ... between women and men of all races” (251).

In this study, I shift the focus away from “women” and “men” to the realm of discourse, where gender (rather than sex) is analytically significant. As a result, I am particularly interested in the discursive definitions of the terms “masculinity” and “femininity” in Stockley’s and Page’s romances and in the discursive context within which the romances were written. Many of the accounts of this discursive context (such as those by Mitchell and Pykett) read the years between 1890 and 1920 as a “period of crisis” in Britain for the definition of “masculinity” and “femininity”. This perception by theorists and historians recognises a particularly intense manifestation of the generally unstable and contested nature of these terms. As opposites, “masculinity” and “femininity” are mutually constitutive of one another, but are also defined through their diverse relations to various other important chains of signifiers. Consequently, the meanings of “masculinity” and “femininity”, despite their undeniable social “reality effect” exist primarily in the unstable relationships between sets of intersecting and opposing terms. In Britain, in the 1890s, notions of gender articulated significantly (for the purposes of this study) with the following discourses: firstly, the discourses associated with empire, class, race, and nationhood; secondly, those which spoke of kinship, domesticity, and feminism; and thirdly, discourses of nature and romanticism.

This study demonstrates that feminist and bourgeois domestic discourses played a more important role in defining the particular nature of British imperial rule than is suggested by analyses such as those of McClintock, which foreground a heroic, anti-domestic narrative as representative of the entire imperial project, which is consequently narrowly conceived in terms of “white, male power”(1). My study of

Page and Stockley has revealed that such a conception is of limited explanatory power. In Page's novels we meet grown-up versions of the patriotic and tomboyish "new girls". In the novels, the colonial adventures of these "new girls" help them to attain a virility and redefined "purity", which fits them for the colonial, settler version of Dowie's eugenic conception of motherhood. Stockley, on the other hand, shares the ambivalences about femininity endemic to the novels of sensation, and the contempt for domesticity displayed by the heroic romance, while also repeating George Egerton's articulation of feminine sexuality in terms of Britain's racial "other". Chapter 2 takes up these themes and focuses on the conflict between colonial settlement and feminine individuation in the novels of Page and Stockley. While Page is able to settle her heroines within a redefined bourgeois domestic sphere, Stockley's ambivalences about domesticity are less easily managed.

In chapter 3 I explore the nature of the "patriarchy" which was invented in certain discourses about colonial Rhodesia. Rather than being a monad of white male power, these historical discourses bear the marks of the struggle between heroic and bourgeois definitions of masculine power, freedom, and duty. I relate this struggle to the changing economic and administrative character of Southern Rhodesia after 1897, showing that these struggles over the meaning of masculinity had crucial implications for the definition of a Rhodesian identity. I also explore the ways in which the domestic romances of Stockley and Page played an important historical role in this process of definition. Page's fiction, in particular, domesticated the heroic Rhodesian male, thus rendering him a suitable representative of Rhodesia's new bourgeois order.

Chapter 4 provides a theoretical and historical framework for understanding the contradictions of identification that beset a settler nationalism. Here I illustrate that the difficulties of imagining an extended imperial community repeat on a larger

scale the contradictions involved in imagining the smaller, national community, since the racial, class-based and gendered contests over bourgeois identity provide the basis for imagining both nationalism and imperialism. This chapter delineates the gendered discourses central to the construction of both a “properly” bourgeois imperial identity and its heroic variants, and also provides an analysis of the historical production of discourse about British women in the course of the colonisation of Rhodesia.

In Chapter 5, I outline the differing Rhodesian identities imagined by Page and Stockley respectively, in terms of their different choices of the definitional “others” and founding archetypes which asserted their notions of a new Rhodesian identity. I also show the marked historical shifts which take place in the patriotic visions of both writers.

In chapter 6, Stockley’s and Page’s re-interpretations of conventional patriotic discourses about British women are considered in relation to Foucault’s notion of “hysterization”. While both authors redefine domestic femininity to incorporate certain aspects of the “improper feminine”, Page’s somewhat cautious redefinitions attempt to extend the domestic “virtues” of the bourgeois woman into the public sphere and the heroic spaces, while Stockley’s patriotism is most often expressed through a preference for the heroic discourses.

Stockley’s fundamentally unstable metamorphoses and shifts between “proper” and “improper” femininity are discussed in detail in chapter 7.

¹ As Robert Dixon points out, “By the 1890s, the New Imperialism was clearly a willed re-assertion of an imperial ideal on the wane. The New Imperialists advocated a spirit of defensive aggressiveness not only against external threats, but also against internal decay” (3).

² Gothic fiction falls on the “domestic” side of the polarity, since, although it has rather different preoccupations, it is often simply a form which allows expression of those elements (such as sexuality and violence) generally forbidden in more conventionally domestic fiction.

³ The label “new woman” for a new style of feminist passed into general currency in Britain in about 1896 (Jordan 21). Ellen Jordan identifies the periodical Punch as having been primarily responsible for the fact that the label stuck – Punch linked together its line of anti-feminist jokes, the label as suggested

by the writer Ouida, and the public interest in feminism sparked by an article by feminist writer Sarah Grand (20).

⁴ Mitchell provides the following history of the changes in meaning of the term tomboy:
The Oxford English Dictionary's entry describing "tomboy" as "a girl who behaves like a spirited or boisterous boy; a wild romping girl; a hoyden" dates the usage from 1592. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the term had lost its pejorative flavor; the OED's evidence is an 1876 quotation from Charlotte Yonge's Womankind: "what I mean by 'tomboyism' is a wholesome delight in rushing about at full speed, playing at active games, climbing trees, rowing boats, making dirt-pies, and the like."(104).

Chapter Two

Reconstructing Romance: Femininity in the Rhodesian Romance

Cynthia Stockley and Gertrude Page inherit the tendency in late Victorian and Edwardian girls' fiction which identifies the heroine with the heroic masculine ideals of imperialism. Their adventurous "girls who want to be boys" are figures borrowed from popular girls' stories and transplanted into the "woman's romance" form – a domestic genre aimed at an audience of older girls and adult women. The misogyny and hysterical denial of femininity which are often entailed by the masculine ideal, as expressed in the heroic discourses of imperialism, do not dismay Page's and Stockley's Rhodesian heroines. They enthusiastically adopt the signifiers of heroic masculinity despite the fact that "true" femininity, defined in terms of marriage and motherhood, is their domestic destiny, as blueprinted by the bourgeois romance.

Such cross-gender identification in the novels forms the basis of feminine individuation for many of Stockley's and Page's heroines. However, the romance form shifts the heroine from her masculine individuation towards the domestic definition of femininity – universal marriage and motherhood. Certain events in British girls' culture at the time these novels were published reveal similar tendencies. The heroic masculine mode of popular British Imperial fiction—call it the "Boy's Own" discourse—became popular among girls in the years before and during the First World War (J.S. Bratton 1986:91). At this time, "the notion of Englishness as a personal ideal [was] gradually transferred to girls' fiction" (Bratton 1986:91). For example, in Terry the Girl Guide, a novel by Dorothea Moore, "'English' is insistently used by the girls as the ultimate word of moral approval" (Bratton 1986:91). As Mitchell puts it, "Girls who

dreamed of being boys were (like their brothers) infected by Edwardian jingo” (1995:119).

These examples from British girls’ popular culture suggest, on the one hand, the birth of a “new woman”, and on the other, the concomitant embrace by some such “new women” of the ideology of empire¹. It is certainly possible to imagine that the patriotic fervour of the New Imperialism, and its almost exclusively heroic expressions, facilitated the rise of certain popular manifestations of feminism. In the case of Stockley and Page, the feminist notions which circulate in their texts are often eventually channelled to serve imperial and national interests.

The “new women” in Stockley’s and Page’s novels are notable for the fact that they neither avail themselves of the advantages of employment, nor of advanced study². Page’s heroines characteristically leave an overcrowded England full of surplus women for the adventure and freedoms they imagine possible in Africa. Their departure allows them to avoid the alternative of being forced to undertake employment in “women’s professions”, which they perceive as restrictive and limiting. In the colonial setting, they adopt the characteristics, the leisure pursuits and the jargon of heroic colonial masculinity. Similarly, Stockley’s English heroines look forward to the freedom from conventional restraints possible in the colonies and occasionally break the rules governing feminine domestic propriety through their mimicry of masculinity. However, Stockley differs from Page in the greater extent to which her heroines transgress the norms that governed feminine sexuality.

Despite these differences, though, both authors use the romance form to magically resolve the contradiction between such transgressions and conformity with the domestic ideal. The narrative goal of these “women’s” quest romances is marriage, a redefined femininity and a newly constituted domestic sphere. Mitchell’s term

“gentling” describes the way in which boyish heroines are tamed and feminised in the closing pages of girls’ adventure fiction. A similar form of closure is provided in the romance narratives of Stockley and Page, where the masculine individuation or transgressive sexuality of the heroine is adjusted, and she is accommodated, with varying degrees of success, to her feminine domestic role.

Likewise, in English history, girls’ spontaneous adoption of the signifiers of imperial masculinity occasioned an anxious re-imposition of the norms of traditional femininity. For instance, when Robert Baden-Powell’s youth movement, “Scouting for Boys”, gained favour among British girls around the time of the First World War, it was feared that the “women’s issue” and “co-education” (highly contentious and visible topics in the media) might contaminate the fledgling scout movement.³ Baden-Powell found it undesirable that girls should behave like “tomboys”, and “emphasised in his early writings for girls the separate and distinctive responsibilities of women as wives and mothers” (Warren 1986:244-5). This early emphasis on mothering is still residually present in the different names of the movements—the solitary, pioneering “scout” and the nurturing, helpful “guide”.

World War I brought an end to the period of relative flexibility of gender definitions for girls. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the economic and psychological shocks of war sent women back into the home, and re-imposed a new and more rigid schema of gender and age demarcations. This laid down a path of development for girls which took them through a “boyish” phase to the socially acceptable goal of eugenically healthy motherhood. Older girls, newly sexualised in popular perceptions of the “flapper”, adopted the romance form as the fiction of their choice. Read in this historical context, the fiction of Stockley and Page can be seen to bridge the gap between the adventurous and boyish heroines of girls’ fiction and the

woman's romance, which focuses on conventional domestic femininity. However; their romances are a more hybrid form than this simple schematisation can suggest – they also share the anxieties about feminine sexuality conventionally expressed in gothic and sensation fiction, and borrow certain polemical strategies from the “new woman” fiction of the 1890s.

As pointed out in chapter 1, the feminine sexuality of England's “new woman” was often imagined in terms of Colonial Discourse. Critics of the “new woman” found her sexuality “savage” and “primitive” – a marker of national regression. In an interesting contrast, “new women” such as George Egerton, while using their critics' very vocabulary of “savage” and “primitive” sexual passions, valued such “wildness” positively, as the essence of femininity, and enshrined it within their often Orientalist discourse about feminine sexuality. Stockley and Page respond differently to these discussions of feminine desire, though a similar basic triangular structure governs the novels of both. For both writers a “primitive” (often African) force of feminine sexuality pulls their heroine in one direction. At the same time, she is torn between the bourgeois values and ideals of the domestic woman, on the one hand, and the heroic masculine imperial ideal on the other. Broadly speaking, in Page's fiction, sexuality loses the battle, and a toughened version of the domestic woman wins the day, ruling in support of an (appropriately domesticated) masculine imperial ideal. For Stockley, however, the domestic woman generally has little appeal, and her heroines' sexual transgressions align them with the more “passionate” point of the triangle, from which position they are easily partnered with heroic imperial masculinity.

As suggested by the above summary, fulfilment of the bourgeois romance plot through the marriage of the heroine to the markedly masculine hero requires various

compromises for those discourses of masculinity which in this study are termed “heroic”. These discourses, which achieved a certain ascendancy in the late Victorian period expressed the preference for a more “muscular” definition of masculinity, and are not easily incorporated into the bourgeois romance. They had an important influence on Stockley and Page, who would have come across them in the immensely popular heroic romance form of boys’ fiction, and of the fiction by H. Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling. This physically virile ideal flees the domestic sphere, and eschews romance and sentiment. In Africa, the heroic imperial discourse is typically used to express the desire to penetrate, rape and plunder the “virgin” continent. In contrast, the bourgeois romance entrenches the heroine’s domestic and sentimental power within her realm, the home. In the colonial setting, the bourgeois discourse of domesticity can express the desire to establish the white homestead and community. As Jenny Sharpe has shown, the bourgeois discourses became increasingly popular as the British came to understand their colonial project as a “civilising” mission (7).

Marriage entails “settling” the hero and heroine within a feminine domestic domain, which is the prerequisite for the establishment of the colonial settlement in the wilderness. This “settled” lifestyle, is, however, anathema to the heroic tradition, in which it signifies the clasp of the detested feminine fetters of “home”. As Chennells points out, in the history of Rhodesian fiction, Stockley and Page “created the most enduring images of settler life” and between them constructed certain myths, which never entirely disappeared from the settler novel (178). While this is certainly true, Page and Stockley adopt rather different strategies when imagining settlement and incorporating the signifiers of heroic colonialism within the bourgeois romance.

Page’s romances generally achieve closure through a marriage which feminizes the previously androgynous heroine and domesticates the masculine world

of the hero. After some early qualms, Page becomes an enthusiastic proponent of “settlement” and its associated natalist discourses (discourses, that is, which promote motherhood as a means of strengthening the nation or race). As such, she often succeeds in imposing “settled” domesticity (albeit redefined) upon her heroes and heroines. Page’s Rhodesian environment selects the British “new women” who are tough and adventurous enough to survive its challenges, and rewards them with romance. Their experience of this romance gentles them, and thus contains them within the domestic definition of femininity.

In contrast to Page’s preference for settlement, Stockley’s nostalgia for the pioneering and unsettled “early days” of Southern Rhodesia sometimes results in a compromise between matrimony and mobility. Her heroines attain individuation through their transgression, or perceived transgression, of social and sexual conventions, and through their rejection of, or rejection by, women’s society and the restrictions of “women’s culture”. (In this they are identified with heroic masculinity.) Though her novels end with marriage, Stockley is never entirely attracted to the settled domesticity which pervades Page’s happy endings, and her heroines often simply adopt the mobile lifestyle of the heroes. These marriages assimilate the heroine into the heroic masculine sphere while resolving anxieties about her perceived or actual transgression of sexual norms.

The novels of Stockley and Page are thus similar to the Australian adventure fiction by Rosa Praed, as discussed by Robert Dixon. According to Dixon, Praed’s “heterogeneous re-writing” of the heroic formula popularised by Haggard “produces a new ‘reading’ of [Haggard’s] masculine form” (Writing the Colonial Adventure 96). Like Praed Stockley and Page do not succeed in bringing their hybrid romances to “uniformity of viewpoint” or “ideological closure”, and also use fantasy “with its

stress on the fluidity of identification” and “multiple subject positions” (Dixon 96) in their re-writing of both the domestic and heroic romance. However, Dixon’s approval of the “multiple viewpoints and contradictory meanings” he finds in Praed, is perhaps overly celebratory, underplaying the very real limitations of Praed’s chosen form.

Gertrude Page: Settling the “New Woman”

Many of Page’s plots follow a pattern one might call “the taming of the tomboy”. In this pattern, the taming, or gentling (to use Mitchell’s term) of the heroines through matrimony or maternity provides closure for the novels. The “new women” are brought to occupy more traditionally feminine roles, sometimes with a degree of forceful masculine persuasion, but most often simply through the irrefutable gender-logic of the romance. However, during Page’s career specifically, the hybridization between masculine identification and domesticity, as effected by her romances, gradually establishes new definitions of femininity and domesticity.

Of the nineteen novels Page wrote in as many years, twelve are set in Rhodesia. The first novel, entitled Love in the Wilderness (1907), has a subtitle, The Story of Another African Farm, and thus alerts the reader to its difference from Olive Schreiner’s acclaimed and outspokenly feminist text The Story of an African Farm. Page’s novel presents three feminine characters who are all prototypes for the heroines of her subsequent novels – the endangered and sensitive English girl, the tougher tomboy, and the settler wife.

The Vulnerable English Girl

Page’s first heroine, Enid Davenport, is portrayed as refined and sensitive, though attracted to the freedom from convention she initially imagines possible in Rhodesia. Enid leaves England for the “freedom” and “individualism” she imagines possible in a “young, new country” and goes to live with her married sister, Marian, in Rhodesia

(7-8). Her romantic dream is shattered by the unglamorous realities she encounters on her brother-in-law's farm, where she is introduced to impoverished and claustrophobic Rhodesian farm life. She is presented as a thinker, of mildly feminist views. (Though "not an agitator for Woman's Rights by nature", she is inspired by the injustices of colonial domesticity, and settler women's unacknowledged contribution to the empire, and delivers several rather hectoring orations on these themes to various male companions [1907:68]). She explains that she left England for Rhodesia in an attempt to avoid the necessity of earning her living in a "situation" or "woman's profession" (1907:7). Her rejection of a certain kind of paid employment is as decided as her rejection of the conventional domestic woman's role, which she interprets as that of a "drudge" or "slave" (72,186). (These racially and class-inflected terms suggest that Page's snobbery is as salient in this regard, as is her rejection of women's domestic exploitation.) She secretly despises her sister's "dough-coloured baby", and holding it, feels no maternal longings, but rather "as if she had a small pig in her arms" (58). She perceives the domestic realities of her brother-in-law's impoverished farm as sordid, claustrophobic and frustrating and her urge to escape becomes uncontrollable:

Enid looked across a planting of mealies to the little square, red-brick building, with its ugly tin roof, its aggressive appearance, and the high kopjes smothering it on every side—and there was a sudden tightening at her heart (22).

At this stage Enid becomes vulnerable to the advances of the lascivious "pioneer", Whiteing (discussed in the following chapter), and then almost succumbs to her overpowering love for the hero, Keith Meredith. Enid meets Meredith, a "powerful, iron-framed hunter" (121), who is eminently desirable but unfortunately still married. She is tempted to flout convention entirely and run off with him, but resists.

Her desire to run away with Meredith occasions a battle of forces within her. On the one hand, she feels deserted by other women – domestic femininity has not provided her with the needed support for her to be able to live up to its ideals. On the other hand, her “primitive” surroundings have awakened different forces of femininity in her – the forces of primordial wildness and sexual desire. She asks herself: “in the wilderness, might not one slide back into that primitive simplicity of the Race and do as the wilderness did?” (200). However, the forces of domesticity win out over the forces of primitiveness, and, strengthened by a morally inspiring letter written by her late mother, and by the spirit of a global imperial sisterhood, she resists temptation, renounces her adulterous desires, and is appropriately rewarded by the timely death of Meredith’s wife.

Love in the Wilderness exemplifies Page’s colonial variant of the “purity” genre in “new woman” fiction (as defined by Cunningham). Rhodesia provides her heroines with a knowledge of the temptations and threats of life from which they are protected in England. The wilderness, as a space of potentially dangerous sexual freedom, meets an opposing force – the “pure” ideals of domestic femininity. Through the clash of these opposites, the heroine emerges older, wiser, and in touch with a “natural” feminine sexuality. The triumph of domestic values, however, ensures that her newly discovered sexuality is contained by marriage, and does not cut her off from the morally superior values of British middle-class femininity. Enid’s mother, warning her daughter of the consequences of adultery, spells out global ambitions for a universal sisterhood in domestic femininity:

None of us fall alone. Every woman in the world may be a tiny bit the worse for your yielding—every woman in the world may be a tiny bit the stronger for your renunciation. And all are sisters. What power has race, or creed, or clime, or country, compared to the great tie of womanhood (222).

Despite this victory of the forces of domestication and purity over the wilderness, Enid, as a vulnerable and sensitive English girl, cannot be easily imagined settling in Rhodesia. Whiteing attempts to kill her, when she refuses his advances, but she survives the gunshot wound. Meredith, freed by his wife's death, then marries Enid, and takes her, still weak from Whiteing's gunshot, back to England. The novel closes with her recovering from the gunshot, but safely married and on a ship to England. At this stage of Page's career, sensitive young Englishwomen such as Enid are lucky if they escape Rhodesia with their lives and souls intact.

Page's other "purity" novel, The Silent Rancher (1909), is a narrative about another vulnerable English girl. Unlike Enid, however, Evelyn, the heroine of the later novel, is a personification of "purity". This dramatises the horror when she, unwittingly, becomes engaged to a man who is notorious in Northern Rhodesia for keeping black concubines. Enid, as an innocent, morally upright and idealistic representative of British domestic virtues, is saved from her degenerate fiancé, Sir Henry Mahon, and learns that purity armed by a knowledge of the evils of the world is far more powerful than innocent ignorance.

Several of Page's early romances repeat this pattern, where the "ladylike" heroine or secondary character almost succumbs to the threatening and inhospitable wilderness. As Page's Rhodesian patriotism increases, her initial resistance to settling her heroines in Rhodesia disappears, and she gravitates towards writing the settler's story of settlement and domestication. Page finds that the easiest way to "settle" her feminine characters in the new colony is to define a new femininity more appropriate and less vulnerable to the colonial context. In writing the narrative of settlement, Page is increasingly attracted to the "tougher" qualities of the tomboy, rather than to more sensitive and vulnerable heroines.

Taming the Tomboy

The tomboy is present in Love in the Wilderness, though as a secondary character.

She is the Rhodesian-born Nan Joynson, who rides, hunts, swims, and generally enjoys the freedom to evade the dictates of domesticity. As Mitchell has shown, this was a common signification of the colonial girl in Victorian and Edwardian girls' fiction. Nan, as "new woman", thus displays characteristics borrowed from men – she is tomboyish, undomesticated and sporty. This unconventional femininity contains suggestions of inappropriate "otherness", and Nan's distance from the British norm of domestic femininity is expressed in racial terms. The headmistress of a fashionable boarding school in England sends Nan home, commenting: "I like you very much, dear ... but I think you are almost as out of place here as an aborigine" (55).

Finally, Page sketches Marian, Enid's married sister, domestic drudge and "white slave" to her family, as a rather sad contrast to Enid and Nan (72). In Page's novels, the "new girl" of girls's fiction must finally grow up, and in the romance, that means romance and marriage. However, Marian's fate as settled colonial drudge must, at all costs, be avoided. For Enid, married love and domesticity acquire meaning and are differentiated from drudgery when she discovers romance. Nan also marries and escapes drudgery, but in her case, this escape is effected through her ability to hold on to the privileges of boyhood. Her romance with Dicky Byrd is one of chummishness rather than passion. As Chennells points out, the two are "arrested in childishness by the absence on the veld of any serious challenges that might force them into adulthood" (183).

After Love in the Wilderness, ten of Page's subsequent romances choose the tomboy as heroine, appropriately endowed with independent intellectual views. As mentioned above, to ensure fictional closure and an appropriately maternal destiny for her heroines Page finds it necessary to "tame" her tomboys. This "taming", unlike the

more forceful taming of Shakespeare's shrew, takes the form of a mysterious alchemical transformation from tomboy to domesticated woman, with the romance of the hero's passionate kisses serving as catalyst to the reaction.

Dinah, from "The Edge O' Beyond" (1908), epitomises Page's "New Woman" who is brought to her maternal and marital destiny by the end of the novel. She rejects the traditional "propriety" expected of women – she swears, smokes and has no domestic skills whatsoever, while her close friendship with her brother, Billy, earns the two siblings the nickname "Saul and Jonathan" (151). Dinah's defining characteristic is her love of mobility. A young woman of independent means, she is able to travel when and where she likes, and she has spent the past year globe-trotting:

It's unsettling, of course, but I don't mind that. I think nothing is more dreadful than to be settled in one place for a period unknown. I'd sooner live in a flying machine (28).

I want movement and change, for years to come. I hate peacefulness – it's only stagnation. I want to see and experience everything – everything! (50)

Dinah is at her best when in motion – she is most attractive when walking or riding. Ted Burnett, the hero, comments, "How ripping Miss Webberley looks on horseback", and then adds, "I never saw a woman walk better in my life. It's a pleasure to see her move" (74).

Dinah's love of freedom and mobility and hatred of being "settled" seem to disqualify her immediately as a Rhodesian settler, or as a married woman: "Not for all the world did Dinah intend to put her head under the yoke, and have to consult another as to her coming and going, when she had the chance to be so gloriously free" (115). Consequently, she rejects Ted Burnett's first offer of marriage. She knows that her restlessness would interfere with their married bliss: "a restless fever to be away would fret my blood and make me an unendurable companion" (141).

However, despite this initial determination, Dinah finds on her return to London, that, after meeting and departing from Burnett, her life of mobility has become empty – she “had to try and manufacture interests that would fill the hours with other than boredom” (169). The meaninglessness of her earlier pursuit of mobility finally persuades her to return to Burnett and to marry him. The novel ends with Dinah settled on a farm in England with Burnett and “a troop of three sturdy infants” (279).

While the historical phenomenon of the “new woman” is inseparable from the feminist and suffragist movement in England, Page’s feminism is of an extremely limited nature. As pointed out, her fiction does not espouse work or further study for women. Instead, as an alternative to paid employment for women in England, she expounds the arguments that encouraged white women’s emigration to a destiny of wifehood and motherhood. Within this context, she argues for romance and sympathetic marriage as the right of a white female colonist, without which she cannot adequately fulfil her maternal functions. Consequently, some relatively feminist moments in her work highlight the plight of abused white women trapped in unhappy marriages, and espouse legal and social equality for men and women in relation to divorce.

In “The Edge O’ Beyond” Dinah comments that “taking a spouse under existing [divorce] laws” is equivalent to “buying a pig in a poke” (157). Upon witnessing the distress of Joyce, whose husband denies her a divorce, Dinah writes to her friend Cecil “I am going to turn from a passive suffragette to an active one” (259). Dinah plans to protest the divorce laws which only permit women to divorce their husbands if they can prove him guilty of adultery and an additional misdemeanour. It is possible that Page feels the need to mitigate her controversial stance by means of

the self-mocking comments with which Dinah makes herself and suffragism itself appear ridiculous:

I shall head a huge procession, probably on stilts, to the Houses of Parliament, and there, waving my stilts wildly in the air, I shall demand redress. My point will be that any man who refuses to free his wife, when she asks him, shall explain his reasons to not less than five hundred suffragettes, and after that, if anything is left of him, it ought to be put in the British Museum, among the Nation's Antiquities, as representing the last of his order (260-261).

Dinah's tone of ridicule reaches its apex where she imagines "suffragette" activism transferred to "indelicate clad Mashona woman" (261) – which she considers to be an utterly ludicrous proposition:

what larky times for everyone here when those strenuous ladies mount empty whisky-casks, on a kopje-side, and harangue a crowd of indelicate clad Mashona women! Just think of the possibilities for the disturbers! Rats and mice forsooth! Why any disrespectful male creature can produce a snake at the psychological moment if he wants to—or a wild cat—or a fearsome baboon—or the creature in his daring may even lure a lion into the fold! Yes, I'll certainly do my suffragetting in England (261).

This is a significant moment, which shows Dinah hovering on the brink of feminist loyalty to womankind, until she realises that such feminine solidarity would extend to Mashona women. As an English "new woman", she feels more in sympathy with the practical jokes of "disrespectful male creatures", than with the alien femininity of the racial "other". Page's "new women" generally, like Dinah, leave their feminism "in England", and learn to adapt to their domestic roles in Rhodesia – imperial settlement requires women's solidarity, not women's suffrage.

In The Silent Rancher (1909), Page again presents the case for the social acceptance of divorced women, although here she also weakens the force of her argument. Gwendolen Leven, a divorced and remarried woman, accepts in part society's condemnation of divorced women. She argues that women are not yet strong enough to have the right to divorce their husbands, although a time will come when this will no longer be the case:

Society must set its face against divorce at present, for the welfare of the multitude; but by and by, when women are braver and stronger and more dependable, there will dawn a day of wider and deeper significance (275).

Gwendolen sees herself as playing a pioneering role in this movement towards women's equality: "many must fall to make a path for those that follow ... I am but the merest footprint on the path" (275).

Dinah's "taming" sets the pattern for many of Page's later romances, including her most popular work, Paddy the Next Best Thing, which is set in Ireland and London. Paddy is a tomboy, who "ought to have been a boy" (12). Her father calls her "Paddy-the-next-best-thing" when she is born, because he wanted a boy, but "got the very next best thing" (11). She insists that "I'm not a girl, and I'm not a boy—I'm Paddy." (70). Observing Paddy's youthful energies, a character comments, "she ought to have been a boy, really, oughtn't she? One can't help feeling there's good material wasted" (12). Her father feels that "If she'd been a boy—there'd not have been a soldier in the British army to touch her" (72), and "if she'd been a man, she'd have written her name in English History" (82). However, despite all these regrets, Paddy's father comes to the realisation that the best masculine traits are not "wasted" on a woman: "there's just as much need in the world for brave women as brave men" (82). Paddy's childhood heroes are models of heroic British masculinity—"Captain Bailey" and "Selous" (142). When Paddy's father dies, leaving the family indigent, Paddy bears the burden of supporting the family, since her father made her promise to "look after your mother just as if you were a son" (111). Paddy hates her work as a dispenser, "mixing silly medicines among the smuts and chimneypots" (140), because she has to leave Ireland for London, and this limits her pursuit of more glamorous masculine pleasures such as boating. When the aristocratic Lawrence falls in love with Paddy, she finds her boyishness unable to withstand his sympathetic approach.

Here romance both unnerves and emasculates the heroine: "Great tears gathered in her eyes and fell on her clasped hands. Why, oh why, did he unman her?" (228).

Lawrence recognises in Paddy a great womanliness, and under his gaze she becomes "Patricia the Great" (233).

The "boyishness" which Page so often deploys in her heroines effectively desexualises them. The "boylike" Hilary Fortescue (132) of The Great Splendour (1912) delights in various masculine pursuits:

[she] thoroughly understood the mechanism of a motor; galloped straddle-legged across the moors; shot birds, and rarely missed; and learned Greek and Latin ... she played half-back at football, as if it were the most natural thing in the world (53).

Hilary embodies a desexualised innocence. In this way, Page succeeds in purifying her heroines of the threat of a mature feminine sexuality. When describing Hilary to others, John, the hero of the novel, calls her a "little schoolboy girl", whom he defines as "Eve before anyone had thought of the apple" (156).

In Follow After! (1915), Nurse Grey also meets her maternal destiny, despite the fact that she is one of Page's only working women, and has a rather unfeminine lifestyle. She travels through Africa accompanied only by her African bearers, and participates as a soldier in the fictionalized military rescue of Karonga. Her bravery leads a male character to suggest: "They'll have to invent a Victoria Cross specially for women", to which she replies "I'd sooner have any sort of medal won by men" (75). However, upon falling in love, she begins to express her discontent with her life as a working woman:

"We take up interesting work, and tell ourselves joyfully that we are free of all the things that make women lose their hopes and dreams and ideals so quickly. And the years pass, and we work on, glad to be independent—waiting still for the best. And then there comes a time when we look in our mirrors, and see new lines, new grey hairs, the faded look of the woman whose life is mostly work." (106).

Griselda Malam of Page's short story "His Job" (1918) treks across Africa with "sixty natives and no white man" (153). She does not initially impress the hero of the story, who exclaims: "Bah! Give me a womanly woman - not a masquerader!" He accuses her of "Aping the men" (153) when he hears that she "had no white man courier, and she wore a knickerbocker suit, and not only carried her own gun, but kept the whole cavalcade in meat all the way" (153). However, Page's narrator emphasises that Griselda is no "masquerader." She does "the things that daring, unusual, rather masculine women do", but is nonetheless "not in the least like unto them". Instead, she combines her daring deeds with a passive and feminine nature: "a quiet, homely turn of mind - always ready to darn her brothers' socks, and cook for them, and make their wilderness homes pretty" (161). Griselda's unquestionable femininity and domestic abilities removes the threat of her unconventional lifestyle.

In many novels, Page depicts two sisters, one tomboyish and one more conventionally feminine, as central characters. This strategy provides the reader with two rather different feminine points of identification in the novel, and emphasises that the two different feminine "types" have a great deal in common, as well as highlighting their differences. Paddy the Next Best Thing follows this pattern, as do The Pathway (1914), and The Rhodesian (1912). The Pathway tells the story of the tomboyish Bobby, (who has a more ladylike sister, Betty). The adventurous heroine, Bobby, foils a murder plot to kill a well-known Rhodesian politician, Sir James Fortescue, and then, gentled by the horrors of her experience, settles down to marry him. Diana, of The Rhodesian, is an obvious reincarnation of Dinah (from The Edge O' Beyond). Diana has a more conventional sister, Meryl, who has decided, in a burst of imperial fervour, to marry the Boer politician William van Hert and "cement the races" (35). In this story, which is discussed in detail in chapter 6, the feisty Diana's

role is not so much to be tamed by a man as it is to tame a man. Meryl and van Hert break off their engagement, and Diana marries Van Hert instead.

The Toughened Colonial Housewife

Four of Page's later novels avoid the conventional domestic romance form, and here Page is able to present a less depressing fate for miserable and abused colonial domestic drudges. Like Marian of Love in the Wilderness, the heroines of these stories, Joe Lathom and Jill, are married women whose husbands are Rhodesian farmers. Unlike poor Marian, however, Joe and Jill benefit from Page's more developed commitment to Rhodesian nationalism and they embody success stories of settlement which benefit not only the Empire, Rhodesia, their husbands and future generations, but themselves as well.

Joe, of "Where the Strange Roads Go Down" (1913) and its sequel, Follow After!, is a tomboy "untamed" by her marriage to the unromantic Cyril. She is 38, and the survivor of a tragic romance with the hero, Jack Desborough. Believing Desborough dead, she has married "little Cyril" and settled on his Rhodesian farm. In England, she shocks acquaintances with her colonial ways – such as the unconventional dress, unfeminine language, and forthright, unsentimental approach in which she delights. Joe discovers that Desborough is alive, having recovered from his illness only to find her already married. They meet by chance while Cyril is away, and are tempted to run away together. They resist the temptation, in the name of honour. Cyril considers suicide, but is happily reunited with Joe instead. The narrator insists that this is a realistic and happy ending, but hints at the possibility of a sequel.

The promised sequel, Follow After!, turns its attention to Jack Desborough and his friend and ranching partner, Pym, who live on lonely ranch in Northern Rhodesia at the outbreak of World War I, and follows their heroic exploits in routing

a German attack on the British settlement in Karonga. On their return, a telegram arrives from Joe Lathom, summoning Jack. Joe has discovered that Jack is “Moya”, the celebrated but mysterious Rhodesian poet, and has decided that he should become the great political leader much needed by Rhodesia. Eventually he agrees. Joe and Cyril become ambulance drivers in Europe in the war, and Cyril is fatally wounded when he throws himself in front of a bullet to save Joe. After a respectable interval, Joe and Jack are finally united.

The novels depict Joe providing support to unsalted new brides, foiling the plots of the degenerate pioneer, dispensing political wisdoms at metropolitan dinner parties, and finally, after Cyril is conveniently disposed of in the Great War, she finds romance with Desborough, who has undertaken a political career as saviour of Rhodesia.

The markers of masculinity persist in Joe after her marriage. The unusual tenacity of her “boy privileges” – her untidiness, lack of interest in beauty, and eccentric mode of dress – is enough to constitute a thorough revision of Page’s concept of femininity. In “Where the Strange Roads Go Down” Joe pays no attention to her appearance, smokes and swears, and, according to the narrator, has an androgynous personality. She has “just that happy blending of masculine freedom, jollity and sport, with a woman’s finer instincts and sympathies” (9). However, Page explains away her potential redefinition of femininity in terms of the absence of romance in Joe’s life. Her husband, Cyril Lathom, whom she likes, but does not truly love, is not masculine enough to lead her to a truly feminine destiny. She will only attain this destiny later in life when reunited with Desborough. Her love for him transforms her into the appropriately feminine and beautiful “Geraldine”. Under the influence of this love her androgyny is somehow refined, and she becomes “a new

being—a blending of all the best and most lovable in her two vaunted personalities” (10). When finally tempted to commit adultery and run away with Desborough, she is utterly feminised in her distress: “Joe’s strength seemed to go from her like water, and nothing remained but suffering, agonized, palpitating womanhood” (347).

Significantly, Page seems to have enjoyed endowing her grown-up, married heroine with “boy privileges” – so much so that she postponed the inevitable fruition of Joe’s romance beyond the ending of “Where the Strange Roads Go Down” and until the very last pages of its sequel, Follow After. In both novels, it is Joe, as “untamed” and adult heroine, who is Page’s model feminine colonist of Rhodesia. Thus, romance between hero and heroine is edged off centre stage by Joe’s anti-romantic tomboy persona. Similarly, romance is entirely absent from Page’s epistolary novels about Jill (Jill’s Rhodesian Philosophy (1910) and its sequel Jill on a Ranch [1921]). Joe, the grown-up tomboy, and Jill (who learns to be a settler mother, farmer’s wife, and eventually a female farmer) are Page’s two most developed explorations of the toughened, mature femininity which she imagined was required for the white settlement of Rhodesia.

Jill, unlike Joe, does not find romance. Her relationship with her husband, Chip, is pragmatic and humorous, and, in Jill’s Rhodesian Philosophy (1910), she refers ironically to him as the “Lord and Master”, and to herself as the “Light of his Eyes” (66). Her initially extravagantly romantic expectations of Rhodesia are based on Chartered Company propaganda, which make the country appear to be “an Eldorado! a Millennium! A Garden of Eden”[4]). Consequently, like Enid of Love in the Wilderness and many of Page’s other heroines, she finds the realities of Rhodesian farm life thoroughly shocking. The subtitle of Jill’s Rhodesian Philosophy (The Dam Farm) expresses her initial frustrations with her new role as colonial housewife.

However, despite her domestic difficulties and boredom, she finds feminine companionship, the joys of motherhood, and the consolations of frontier humour and spiritualism. After her husband's death, in the sequel to the novel, Jill on a Ranch (1922), she, alone among Page's heroines, assumes the productive powers of the farmer. Instead of returning to England, as her friends expect her to do, she takes responsibility for running their cattle ranch. As will be discussed in chapter 6, however, this is not a straightforwardly feminist statement. Jill runs the farm with the assistance of a male farm manager and (rather less conventionally) by receiving spiritual communications from her husband, beyond the grave.

A secondary character in Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy, (known only as "the Neighbour", or "the Writer-Woman") reconciles motherhood with the masculinity and independence of the "new woman". Page sketches "a sportsman Englishwoman" (73) who is equally proficient at writing novels and raising babies. Jill describes her as "delightfully British," and she is endowed with many of the physical characteristics of Page's male heroes: "Fair hair, with a glint in it, blue eyes that look straight at you, and laugh, shapely hands as brown as a berry, and a sort of thorough bred, well-groomed, sportsmanlike air" (71).

Page's "new women", appropriately tamed and hardened, are her solution to the British settlement of Rhodesia. However, Page's remaining challenge is to arrange her heroines' marriages to her Rhodesian heroes. Here Page must manage the shift between heroic and bourgeois masculinity – which mainly involves getting the hero to settle down, and to renounce his inconvenient preference for male company.

Domesticating the Heroic Brotherhood

Heroic models of masculinity emphasised the powerful bonds of imperial brotherhood and loyalty between British men. As mentioned in the discussions of James Fenimore

Cooper, Haggard and the heroic romance in the previous chapter, in the heroic romance, this brotherhood is often misogynistic in its distaste for the values of sentiment and bourgeois domesticity. Page occasionally depicts her “new woman” gaining admission to the sphere of colonial masculinity, and finding a place within the homosocial relations “between men” (Sedgwick). Unlike Stockley’s heroines, who join the heroic brotherhood and flee domesticity and settlement, Page emphasises that this exclusively masculine terrain can, through the marriage of the hero, be subjected to the domestic power of a woman.

In Follow After, she sketches the exclusively male household of Desborough and Pym, friends and partners who live on a Northern Rhodesian ranch, who have “more or less forsworn women” (112). All “women’s work” in the household is performed by the exemplary male servant, Twilight. Page’s depiction of this household, entirely independent of women, is unusual in the context of her other novels – these men do not “rough it” in the usual manner” of Rhodesian men without women (21). The ranch, designed to facilitate their love of hunting and beauty, is more ornamental than productive. At the start of World War I, they hear of a German attack on Karonga, and trek there, without stopping to rest, for three days. About to drop dead of exhaustion, they meet Nurse Grey, trekking south, whose caring attentions save them from exhaustion, and she accompanies them on their quest. Miraculously, they rout the attack on Karonga, and stay to participate in the fighting. By the end of the novel, both men are married – Pym to Nurse Grey, and Desborough to Joe. The exclusively male sanctuary of their estate is transformed, with Nurse Grey gently encouraging Pym to knuckle down and turn it into a productive ranch – this despite the men’s disbelief that “a petticoat could under any circumstances penetrate to our stronghold” (112). The heroic “penetration” of the African continent by the

British male is followed by the occupation of the heroic space by the British female, who brings with her the bourgeois values necessary for settlement.

Several of Page's heroes are like Desborough and Pym in their aversion to feminine company, and jealously protect an exclusively masculine lifestyle. However, Page sketches this masculine sphere in order that the heroine may conquer its exclusivity, and force the hero to reconsider his previously negative estimation of women. The hero of one of her short stories, "There is nothing of any importance" (1918), is not impressed by the women he has seen "at military stations, particularly in India" (45). He prefers to live a life of "stoicism" and "wide independence of women" (60). In addition, he feels that the presence of a woman might alter his mobile life-style, as a big-game hunter. Consequently, he intends to "remain a bachelor always, and feed his soul on bouts of a wild, primitive freedom, hunting the beasts of the earth" (45). On one of his hunting trips, however, he meets a married woman with whom he falls in love, and who threatens his masculine independence—"the carefully built up citadel of sportsman pleasure and stoical content" (60). He does eventually take her away with him and his mobile lifestyle remains unscathed. In fact, his lover effortlessly adapts to and enhances his life as a big-game hunter.

life held nothing better for her than walking on and on with him. She soon became an expert shot, and was able to join him in his expeditions far from the camp, and find time to cook dainty meals for him as well, and to teach the black cook boy so that she might be more free (73).

The British woman "roughing it" in Northern Rhodesia, brings with her a "dainty" domesticity. In order not to compromise either domesticity or the freedom which makes the mobile lifestyle of the hunter attractive, Page summons up the ubiquitous black servant, in an interesting rewriting of the heroic scenario. The faithful noble savage, as companion of the white hunter/adventurer, (Cooper's Chingachgook, or Haggard's Umbopa) is a vital ingredient of the heroic romance. In Page's version, the British

woman displaces the noble savage, who is demoted from valued and warlike companion to “cook boy”. This assumption of a mobile lifestyle is highly unusual for Page’s heroines. However, for Stockley, it is a characteristic means of resolving the tensions between heroic mobility and domesticated marriage in her romances.

Cynthia Stockley: Unsettling Femininity

In Stockley’s fiction, the imperative towards domesticity and settlement is not as powerful as it is in Page’s novels. In fact, despite her chosen domestic form, Stockley shares the distaste conventionally shown by the heroic romance for civilisation and for the “petticoat”, or bourgeois domestic woman. For Stockley, women’s settlement, and the bourgeois domesticity which accompanies it, merely reproduce the constricting forms and conventions of British domesticity. This leads her to construct fantasies of the colonial woman’s mobility rather than fantasies of her settlement, which allows her heroines and readers to identify, at points, with an anti-domestic masculinity popularised by the heroic imperial romance.

In terms of the rules of fantasy, as delineated by Lyn Pykett, such cross-gender identification is quite possible, and the romance form eventually returns the heroine to her feminine identification. For Stockley the depiction of straightforwardly respectable, bourgeois femininity has few attractions. Instead, she inclines towards the ambivalences about femininity encountered in sensation and heroic fiction. In the imperial romance, the significant women who confront the heroic brotherhood on their adventures are the inhabitants of the wild and uncivilised places in which the heroes travel – such as Haggard’s Foulata, Gagool and Ayesha. In the heroic romance, these figures are fascinating and/or horrific embodiments of a feared and desired feminine power and otherness. Stockley’s re-writing of the heroic romance allows her heroines to identify with these feminine figures to a limited degree. An important

difference is that she transposes the horrific aspects of their femininity onto the villainesses of her narratives. Her delight in exploiting the ambivalences about femininity which are created by such a duality marks her as a writer of sensation fiction.

Sensational Stories

In the manner of the novel of sensation, Stockley's narratives effect "the proper feminisation of the heroine", and the punishment of the excessively transgressive, improper feminine (Pykett 85). In this respect, it is apparent that Stockley's novels confront a fundamental ambivalence, or "uncertainty about the definition of the feminine, or of 'woman'", in the same way as the novels of sensation do (Pykett 81). Stockley's novels add a focus on the racialised dimensions of femininity to the metropolitan novel's awareness of the ambivalences surrounding feminine sexual propriety and social class.

A ambivalent portrayal of femininity and feminine sexuality characterises Stockley's early work, most notably Virginia of the Rhodesians (1903), her first novel. This novel is unusual in the context of Stockley's later fiction, in that it is a declaration of war on the domestic woman and on sentimental values. The war is sustained until its very last pages, where the heroine is precariously "tamed" for her marital destiny.

This short moment of critique is succeeded, in Poppy (1909), by a new, though ambivalent, alignment between the passionate heroine and the domestic woman, who are opposed to "other" women generally (the black woman, the Boer woman, the angelic villainess and the slut). The powers of these "other" women are portrayed, but are decisively neutralised.

Stockley's later romances settle into more formulaic oppositions, where the properly domestic woman's role as mother of the nation gains more respect. Nonetheless, straightforward representations of the proper lady have little appeal to Stockley, and her heroines struggle against social definitions of wickedness, while her villainesses, in the manner of sensation fiction, are angelic in appearance, though not in behaviour. The witch/enchantress Africa, with whom the heroines are identified and whom they cannot escape, allows them access to a "natural" sexuality and feminine power, "other" to that of the domestic woman. This profusion of "natural" power is contrasted to the neutralised "other" women, who are seen in terms of emptiness and lack. The identification of the heroine with the wild forces of Africa also solves the problem of pairing her with the heroic pioneer, who is not attracted to conventional, domestic femininity or to a settled, bourgeois life.

Virginia of the Rhodesians, published in 1903, has an episodic structure which follows the lives of six women, all more or less sexually unconventional by the norms of the day. As the heroine, Virginia, puts it, all the women of the novel have either "[gone] to the devil" (254) or are about to go.

Christine Carden, a tragic figure, is unmarried, and has a child by a lover who marries another woman. Upon the death of her lover, Christine's story is revealed and she is briefly reunited with her child before its death. Dorothy Kallender, another tragic figure, is married to an abusive husband, and runs away with a married man. However, both she and her lover are followed and are shot dead by her enraged husband. Mrs Ffollett, the sinister villainess, absconds with a lover (though she is married), whom she ruins and later deserts for another man. The two comic characters, Mrs Skeffy and Mrs Kat, both teeter ridiculously on the brink of committing adultery.

The novel is not simply the tale of Virginia renouncing her past improprieties and being rescued from adultery, although this particular message is certainly reinforced by the moralistic ending. Virginia, as narrator, recounts with glee her deviations from propriety – she flirts outrageously, breaks off several engagements, and almost elopes with a married man. She travels to Umtali from Salisbury in pursuit of the hero, who, unfortunately, is in love with another woman. She experiences the Risings of 1896, but then leaves Rhodesia for Durban “feeling quite reckless” and is swept up in a romance with the married Anthony Sumarez (177). However, Virginia’s romantic entanglements take second position in the narrative which foregrounds her discoveries about the unpleasant aspects of feminine society. The anti-domestic elements of the narrative are only partially neutralised through the domestic closure imposed at the end, where a reformed and penitent Virginia marries the hero.

Poppy: The Story of a South African Girl (1909) is the sensational story of the heroine’s adventures as runaway orphan, unmarried mother, struggling writer and actress. The highly convoluted plot follows a pattern common in sensation fiction, where a transgressive woman of dubious origins is remade into a proper lady. The twelve-year old orphan Poppy flees her foster-family on account of ill-treatment. Lost on the veld, she lands on the doorstep of a farmhouse and is adopted, and later (unknown to her) secretly married, by the sinister and scarred cynic Luce Abinger. He educates her and travels Europe with her – transforming her from a young colonial girl of humble origins into a cultured beauty. On their return to Durban, he informs her of their marriage, and tells her that he will await her acceptance of her status as his wife. However, he forbids her to leave the house. The hero, Evelyn Carson, delirious with fever, wanders through Abinger’s accidentally unlocked gates one night and finds Poppy in the garden. Because of his illness, Carson has no recollection of their

subsequent sexual encounter, and forgets the entire incident. Poppy discovers a secret way of escaping Abinger's garden, and during her forays into the world, is introduced to Durban society as Rosalind Chard. During one of these forays, she discovers that Evelyn is her lover. A female servant discerns Poppy's pregnancy before she herself is aware of it, and Abinger, enraged, tries to wring from her the name of her lover. Poppy, terrified and still unaware of her pregnancy, flees his house. She then takes a ship to England. On board ship, the ship's doctor also suspects her pregnancy and offers to "help her" with an abortion. Horrified by his suggestion, she finally has to confront the reality of her position. In London she attempts, unsuccessfully, to earn money by writing, and gives birth to a son, Pat (the name of Stockley's own son). She is unable to write, however, and, desperate for money, she turns to the stage. Pat sickens in London and has to be sent to the country, where he eventually dies. After his death and many struggles, Poppy eventually achieves fame, under the name "Eve Destiny" as a novelist, playwright and poet. She returns to Durban, believing that Evelyn Carson has married. However, Carson has not married, but has single-handedly established a new British protectorate in "Borapota" – some unspecified region in the heart of Africa. Poppy and Carson meet again, and fall in love. Great intricacies of plot follow, which involve the revelation of Poppy's secrets, and those of two secondary feminine characters, Mary Capron and Clem Portal. While Mary Capron's hidden past destroys her reputation, when Poppy is revealed to Carson as the girl of his "dream" in Abinger's garden, and the mother of his child, this merely confirms his love for her. The novel ends with Sir Evelyn Carson and Poppy (now Lady Carson) sailing off to rule Borapota.

The difficulty in differentiating between good and evil feminine figures provides many intricacies in this tortuous plot. Mary Capron, the angelic-looking

villainess, is the prototype for many of Stockley's later villainesses. She is blonde, serenely beautiful, and despite being an adulteress, achieves an almost perfect mimicry of the "proper lady". However, she is rotten to the core. The divide between Mary and Poppy illustrates Stockley's ambivalences about feminine sexuality. The positive representation of feminine sexuality in this novel received a controversial public reception, and was based on the premise that Poppy, as colonial girl, identifies with Africa, from whence she acquires her passionate nature. The heroine's sexual transgression is more overt than that of any of Stockley's later heroines, but it establishes a pattern (started in Virginia) by which the African environment is associated with the awakening of sexual passions, even in English and colonial heroines.

Stockley shifts her positive view of transgressive feminine sexuality somewhat in The Claw (1911), her most patriotic novel, set during the Anglo-Matabele War. In this novel, the adventurous heroine, Deirdre Saurin, merely appears to be immoral, and in fact aspires to the domestic values of settlement.

The narrator, Deirdre Saurin, heiress and orphan, joins her brother Dick in Rhodesia after the collapse of her fortunes. Dick is a Rhodesian pioneer and settler. Deirdre travels alone to Rhodesia, and there falls in love with the freedom, danger and beauty of the African landscape, and soon afterwards, with the hero, Major Anthony Kinsella. At this stage, Deirdre, aware that Kinsella is believed to be already married, is ostracised by the female settlers because of her publicly revealed passion for him. The story then moves to a retelling of the events of the Anglo-Matabele war and the Shangani patrol incident. Kinsella, lost after an ambush during the war, is believed dead, and Dick, wounded in the war, dies. A financially destitute Deirdre decides to "barter" herself in marriage to Maurice Stair, on condition that they leave Africa, which Deirdre

has come to hate. However, Maurice does not fulfill his promise, and is transformed into a violent and abusive husband. Deirdre finds that her love for Africa is stronger than she thought, and eventually it is revealed that Kinsella has been hidden away and imprisoned for two years by the “Umlimo” of the Matabele “a sort of god or high priest who lives in a cave”, and who is currently plotting the Risings (235,52).⁴ A reformed Maurice is injured and dies while rescuing Kinsella, and Kinsella and Dierdre are finally reunited.

The Claw, as will be explained in chapter 6, is Stockley’s somewhat belated invention of settler patriotism around the Shangani Patrol and the invasion of Matabeleland, twenty years after the actual events. The pressures of patriotism reinforce, in the persona of the heroine, a more careful separation (which began in Poppy) between good women and bad. Deirdre is ostracised by settler women because they believe she is in love with a married man, but their belief is incorrect. No transgression of the sexual mores of the day has in fact taken place, and Deirdre, unlike Christine Carden and Poppy Destin, fights to retain her virginity until she is eventually able to marry Kinsella.

Stockley’s later novels become increasingly formulaic, and she is increasingly attracted to writing gothic short stories and shorter romances (which take the form of short stories, novellas, and short novels).

The highly commercially successful formula of Poppy (where the improper heroine of dubious origins is transformed into a proper woman) is repeated in Stockley’s later narratives. In Kraal Baby (1933), “Dalla the Lioncub” (1924), and The Leopard in the Bush (1927), improper, passionate femininity is again (as in Poppy) imagined in terms of the influences, seductions, and dangers of the African environment. Linnet, of Kraal Baby, is found in a kraal as a baby, and is believed to have “black blood”. The narrative resolves the mystery of her parenthood in order to

prove her a proper woman after all, while sensationally exploiting the possibility that she may have a black mother. Once proved to be the legitimate daughter of a white man and woman, she is free to marry the aristocratic hero.

Dalla, the Dutch heroine of “Dalla the Lion Cub”, is transformed by her travels in Europe, and is rendered proper enough to marry the upright British hero. However, in the sequel, The Leopard, the conflict between her passionate nature and the hero’s restraint destroys her marriage, and kills her son. At this stage a sobered Dalla repents, becomes a nun and a nurse, and the couple are eventually reconciled.

Stockley’s novel, Ponjola (1923), is the sequel to her short story “The Leopard” (1918). In these narratives, Stockley explores the rough life of Rhodesian small-workers (miners who worked on small, often undercapitalised diggings). Her depiction, in Ponjola, of a cross-dressing heroine who masquerades as a miner caused controversy as it was considered an unpatriotic representation of the county. In both narratives, the heroine eventually rescues the hero from despair and alcoholism.

Stockley’s most conventionally domestic heroine is Felicia Lissell, of Tagati (1930). In this novel, the heroine is chaperoned by her aging aristocratic aunt, who visits a nephew, Dick Cardross, a failed Rhodesian farmer. The major conflict in the plot is that between Dick’s wife, the overwhelmingly treacherous villainess, Stella, and the innocent Felicia. Felicia eventually marries the successful Rhodesian mine-owner and farmer Pat Fenn, whose working class origins make him unique among Stockley’s heroes.

A detailed discussion of Stockley’s characteristic ambivalences about femininity follows in chapter 7. Suffice it to say, at this stage, that Stockley’s fascination with feminine sexuality and transgressive femininity means that the masculine identification of her heroines is not as repetitive a theme as it is in Page’s novels. However, masculine

identification is certainly an important force. Many of her heroines are boyish, although few are as tomboyish as Page's heroines. For instance, Poppy is described as "long-limbed, apple-breasted, with the slim strong grace and beauty of a Greek boy", while Berlie and Gay of "The Leopard" are both "out-of-door, golfing, hard-riding girls" (74).

In The Claw, feminine characters find various ways of participating in the exclusively masculine glamour of war and escaping the tedious confinement of the laager. For instance, Mrs Rockwood disguises herself as a soldier, and accompanies her husband to war. In Kraal Baby, the heroine, Linnet, joins her father and his collection of "Hard Cases" on their hunting and exploring expeditions (80). This exceptional privilege is granted to Linnet only by virtue of her boyishness—she is "a topping little sportsman, staunch as a rock, and game as a pebble" (80).

In general, however, Stockley's heroines express their masculine identification primarily by rejecting a domestic, settled life, and in their pursuit of mobility.

Fantasies of Mobility

It is in some ways highly ironic to term Stockley's novels "settler" fictions—it would perhaps be more accurate to call some of them fantasies of feminine mobility. The same cannot be said of Page's novels, apart from "The Edge O' Beyond" and Love in the Wilderness. As mentioned earlier, the very word "settled" has negative connotations to Dinah of The Edge O' Beyond (28). In similar vein, Stockley's narrator of The Claw, Deirdre Saurin, comments "It is far more interesting to be in a country while history is being made than to arrive afterwards, when everything is settled and dull" (29). After having established an ideal bourgeois domestic establishment with Maurice Stair, Deirdre realises that what binds her to Rhodesia is not her recreation of British domesticity, but an attachment to the African landscape

and to her lost love Kinsella. Her motto is anti-bourgeois and anti-domestic “the world is a bridge, pass over it, but build no house there”:

Places appealed to me, and people; houses and things never. Goods and chattels had no hands to hold me as they do some people. Of late I had come to think that life under a tree without any accessories at all could be very full and sweet – if one only shared the shade of the branches with the one right person in all the world (236).

The romanticised, primitivist perspective jostles in Stockley’s fiction with an opposing trend, which favours the bourgeois imperatives of respectable domesticity and the work ethic (the latter is explored in more detail in chapter 5).

At this point, it is important to cast forward to the constitutive mobility of the ideal colonial man – a mobility presented as freedom from the “fettters” of the metropolis. Kay Schaffer identifies a discourse by which the trope of virginity and penetration expresses male settlers’ “conquest of the land” (110).⁵ Annette Kolodny refers to the mobility possible to the male American “pioneer”, by quoting a Wisconsin farmer – “the country was all open and free to roam over” (129). Critics of colonial literature have also noticed the importance of mobility to heroic discourses. For instance, John Noyes interprets mobility as a characteristic mark of colonialism in Southern Africa: [colonial discourse] creates an unlimited mobility across borders” (16). Such a mobility is clearly anti-domestic – Robert Dixon shows that Australian adventure heroes have to be “rendered immobile” before they can settle down to domestic life (Writing the Colonial Adventure 34).

The names of male characters often express a masculine control of territory, whether as the pathbreaking, pioneering “Waybrant”, or the effortless mobility of the “Ranger”. Stockley’s heroes have in common a disgust for easier means of mass transport, such as railways. For example, once the railway arrives, the hero of “Wild Honey” (1914) plans to “make tracks further north” (22). “North”, of course, is the

Rhodesian version of the U.S. “West”, and Stockley, in defiance of the facts of political geography and the partition of Africa after the Berlin Convention of 1884, liked to imagine the existence of vast northern realms for her heroes to explore in an perpetually available supply of “uncivilised” African territories within Africa’s infinite interior.

In contrast to this discourse of male mobility, discussions of feminine mobility emphasise the difficulties, dangers and threats to respectability that are associated with women travelling, especially women travelling alone. In the English context, Vera Brittain describes a kind of family surveillance and chaperonage that governed young women’s mobility in pre-1914 provincial England:

The shortest railway journey to an unspecified destination for an unrevealed purpose was outside the bounds of possibility. Before I went up to Oxford, I had never even spent a day in Manchester without being accompanied by my mother or a reliable Buxton resident. On all my longer journeys I was seen off at the station, had my ticket purchased for me, and was expected to send a telegram home immediately on arrival, the time of which was carefully noted. (120-121)

One might think that the colonial context allowed women some escape from this confinement, especially so, given the presence of different, and less well regulated colonial transport systems. However, this does not always appear to be the case. In the context of the American frontier, Annette Kolodny emphasises the difficulties of mobility for “pioneer women”, whom Margaret Fuller describes as “confined to a comfortless and laborious indoor life” (qtd. in Kolodny 9). Kolodny terms such a life “a nightmare of domestic captivity” (9). Deborah Kirkwood makes the same point, though in a slightly less dramatic way, when discussing the lives of settler women in Rhodesia: “The physical space in Rhodesia is wide and relatively unconfined; for women, the social space proved very limited” (155).

And then, in the context of colonial travel writing more generally, Sara Mills points out how female travellers overcame the constraints of “respectability” that made mobility difficult for them in the colonial period. Among other things, she discusses a “conduct book for lady travellers” that consisted mainly “of advice on how to maintain propriety whilst violating the codes of society by travelling outside the woman’s place – the home” (100).

A fantasy of feminine mobility in the colonies thus co-exists with the difficulties of mobility for women in a world which defined their role in terms of settlement. This ambiguity becomes unusually clear in the case of Stockley’s Poppy, who imagines herself as “one set alone in an arid waste to travel where and how she could, with no help from anyone” (Poppy 67-8). Imprisoned by her guardian, Poppy longs for greater mobility: “the whole world was too small a place for a free spirit” (81). When she escapes, it is to sail for London, in order to establish her career as a writer. As she departs, Stockley’s narrator adds the following warning:

She had yet to find that the gods love not the sound of women’s feet upon the Open Road. Its long level stretches are easy to the feet of men, but for women it most strangely “winds upwards” all the way, and the going is stony, and many a heavy burden is added to the pack the journey was commenced with (210).

Unlike Christine Carden, who is able to travel about “alone and unattached”, Virginia, of Virginia of the Rhodesians, continually struggles against attempts to control her movements. Her brother prohibits her from “floating about the country alone, getting into all sorts of mischief” (59) when she wishes to follow the hero, Gayer Waybrant, to Umtali. However, she is fortunate in finding a supposed chaperone, who does not “try on any chaperone nonsense” with her (60). Later, when she travels to Durban, she is instructed to find “some nice quiet little hotel”, where she is to wait for another chaperone’s arrival from Cape Town. Instead, immediately she arrives in Durban, she

checks into the Royal Hotel, delighted at the thought of not being “tied to some woman’s apron-strings”, and being “free and unattached for a little while” (177).

Deirdre, of The Claw, rids herself of her chaperone by attempting a journey “of the roughest and wildest description” to Mashonaland in a mail-coach, a journey which “very few women had done ... before” (15). This journey is far too dangerous and terrifying for the liking of her chaperone, who was “afraid of being eaten by Lobengula, the King of the Matabele” (15). The road that she follows is the road constructed by the Pioneer Column, and she sees that the “stumps of trees chopped down by the axes of the pioneers [are] still green and sappy in the track” (18). She finds the trip anything but comfortable, “crammed amongst cushions and rugs and parcels and mail-bags and luggage, aching passionately in every bone” (9), while her driver is a sinister drunkard. She is transferred across a river, like the mail-bags, in a canvas bucket (37).

As pointed out above, Stockley’s male heroes are effortlessly mobile in Africa. As hunters, pioneers, adventurers, “lovers” of the veld, they “open” roads “in the wild deeps of Africa, where no one has ever been before” (Poppy 291,178). In contrast to this, Stockley’s heroines, when travelling alone, encounter the perils of the continent, which can destabilise or transform their identity. During an unchaperoned sea voyage to South Africa, the penniless April Poole, in the story “April Folly” (1918), exchanges identities with a titled heiress. In the case of Vivienne Carlton, heroine of the short story “Wild Honey”, Africa’s perils threaten her physical safety, her gender, her chastity, and her sanity. In this story, the heroine is able to pass as a boy, owing to the effects of the African environment. This transformation intensifies the “New Woman’s” masculine femininity, the androgyny which characterises most of Page’s and some of Stockley’s heroines.

In "Wild Honey" Vivienne travels by Cape Cart to Rhodesia. Her goal in this journey is blatantly mercenary – she plans to barter herself in marriage to some wealthy man. An heiress who has lost her fortune, she despises the physical discomfort entailed by her African journey "Sleeping side by side with strange men and a common woman, wedged against them, listening to their snores! Waking in the morning to the intimacy of their unkempt faces" (7). However, this discomfort seems relatively minor after she loses her way and wanders around the veld aimlessly. As she has been warned, the danger of being on the veld is that "the first instinct when you realise you're lost is to start running. Just run and run and run till you drop. Then the madness gets you, and you begin to tear off your clothes and pitch them in every direction as you run" (12). Near Palapye, Vivienne becomes lost in the veld. This landscape is, to her alien eye, a vast, indistinguishable, unmarked and treacherous terrain. Once off the road made by the Pioneer Column, there are no reliable landmarks. Pools of water resemble one another exactly, and trees are "each the exact image of the other" (16). Vivienne soon succumbs to insanity, running wildly and without direction. When she emerges from her insanity, it is to find that she has been lost on the veld for nine days. Upon her rescue by a transport rider, she sees herself in a mirror, and understands why the transport rider has mistaken her for a "young fellow":

She was a tall athletic girl whose love of outdoor exercises had conformed her figure to a boyish flexibility and litheness rather than feminine plumpness. Moreover, such superfluous flesh as she had once possessed was now gone. The veld had turned her into a lanky, dirty, hungry-looking lout of a boy (80).

Vivienne attempts to remain disguised as a boy, as she is terrified that her "spotless reputation" will be besmirched if it becomes known that she had been "[p]icked up by a strange man, kept in a wagon, travelling alone with him on the veld!" (79-80). The fact that she has not stripped herself of all her clothes is attributed to an "unconscious feminine modesty that had remained to her even in madness and panic—restraining her

from that last horror!" (84). During the next two weeks, she discovers that Roper, the transport rider, is "an insufferable brute", and she is "in mortal terror of his ever finding out that she [is] a woman" (86). Unfortunately she begins to outgrow her disguise and assume an unmistakably feminine beauty: "the heavy sunburn wearing off showed the skin beneath clear and tinted; her violet eyes had come out of retreat; her lips, no longer cracked, were a smooth and healthy red" (87). Eventually, Vivienne is rescued by the hero, Kerry Vigne. Vigne, significantly, is one of the pioneers who made the road from Palapye to Bulawayo, and despises civilisation. After her rescue, Vivienne, under the influence of the crooked and speculative atmosphere prevailing in Rhodesia, engages in some sharp dealing for a mine, and for a husband. Later, when suitably reformed, she does eventually marry Vigne, which allows her to share, under his protection, a life of effortless mobility and travel into areas not yet "tamed" or tainted by white civilisation. Vigne commands Vivienne: "You've got to give it all up and come with me – away up North – anywhere I go – and not care where you're going to – and never look back – nor care if you ever come back" (102). On their departure for unknown regions, the previously terrifying and treacherous African landscape embraces both of them: "Old Africa took them to her breast and they became part of and in her" (105).

A fascinating aspect of this story is that it depicts African space as a destructive, disorienting force which dissolves boundaries such as those between the social classes, between masculinity and femininity, between business and crime, and between madness and sanity. Stockley's gothic bent allows the fascination of such a dissolution to be played out, while magically re-establishing boundaries through the intervention of the hero. Vigne, as pioneer, has penetrated and mastered the continent, yet, as an idealistic representative of heroic masculinity he is opposed to the encroachment of an exploitative civilisation. The hero removes the threat of Africa's embrace, and his re-

establishment of boundaries in turn permits a safer, nurturing union for Vivienne with the continent. The fantasy of mobility in Africa is thus safe for British women only when under the protection of the British hero.

In this regard, one of the principal fantasies of Stockley's novels is that women take on the valued attributes of masculinity, joining into the male homosocial "brotherhood" and becoming extravagantly mobile. This fantasy can be productively contrasted to Page's decidedly negative representation of the isolation experienced by settler women, and also to other settler women's representations of their own lives, especially the reminiscences of those settler women who lived in the conventionally heroic, "masculine" spaces of farming and mining. Despite the demographic imbalance between the sexes in the first decades of settlement in Rhodesia, it does not seem likely that women were accepted into the Rhodesian brotherhood, given the following accounts of women's isolation: "I spent five months living alone in that place with only a picannin for company during the day when my husband was at work." (1979:144); "I was left alone with the children for months at a time" (58); "After living nine years in the bush with only her children for company, and without any form of social life and feminine companionship, she became a very shy and retiring person" (75) (all qtd. in Heald).

In Stockley's fiction, the most dramatic instance of a woman infiltrating the male colonial sphere takes place in Ponjola. In this novel, the aristocratic heroine, Flavia, assumes a masculine identity and clothing, and travels to Africa, where she shares the "man's life" of miners and alcoholics. Flavia's physical appearance is a collage of ideal male physical types – "a splendid Greek boy's" or "some gallant Knight of Arthur's Table Round" (9-10). Flavia meets the Rhodesian Lundi Druro, who tells her about Rhodesia and its "indescribable" veld (23). However, he asserts

that a life on the veld is only accessible to men—"a woman like you couldn't possibly live on the veld without a man to look after her". He elaborates:

It's not really the place for a woman, especially a young and pretty woman. You want to be a man, and a tough proposition at that, to appreciate and endure the blessings the veld has to bestow. It's a good place for a fellow who has nothing to lose and everything to forget (23).

As a result of this encounter, Flavia dons the clothing, demeanour and identity of a man, "young Desmond". "Young Desmond" comes to Rhodesia, and lives the rough life of a miner with Lundi Druro, whom she has come to love. Lundi is a drunkard, and a man's man who "never cared for any society but men's" (197-8). All the inner secrets of Druro's "man's world" are revealed to her, and although she later admits to some "awful moments" of "disgust, of detestation, and sometimes of physical fear", she feels that the lack of "boredom" of her life has more than compensated for this (169). She also revalues the "degenerate" masculinity to which she has been exposed in all its vulgarity:

I've discovered that under men's coarseness you often get glimpses of a fine simplicity, a sort of elemental purity. Whereas if a woman is coarse it seems to spring from something irreclaimably murky in her soul, and however subtle and witty her phrases, you are revolted. (169)

In this fascinating passage, Stockley's tolerance for the excesses of heroic masculinity is revealed – a tendency in her work which is explored further in the following chapter, where it is considered in the context of metropolitan anxieties about the "pioneering" masculinity of Rhodesia. However, the passage also shows the apparently transgressive feminine subject establishing her purity by transposing anxieties about feminine sexuality onto an essentially impure and "coarse" feminine "other". In line with this tendency, Desmond redefines the "new woman's" masculine identification as unimpeachably pure, while, as a character, she in fact embodies the voyeuristic and transgressive impulses of British femininity, excluded from the

masculine pleasures and privileges of the heroic realm. This dual attraction, to sexual conformity and to sexual transgression, characterises Stockley's fiction more generally, and Ponjola in particular.

Despite the fact that the reader knows from the beginning that Desmond is a woman, Page uses the male pronoun for her protagonist until halfway through the novel. This heightens the ambiguity of the "young Desmond's" gender identity. To add to this confusion, "he" is harassed by a sexually voracious married woman who falls in love with him aboard ship. As a "lawless female scallywag decked in men's trousers" (304), Desmond elicits a scandalised reaction when her feminine identity is made public. Those who display horror are reacting to what Homi Bhabha has called, in another context, the "menace" of the inappropriate, ambiguous subject (129). Measured according to the standards of feminine "propriety", she is accused of having behaved in a shockingly unwomanly manner:

She had fled to South Africa disguised in male clothing. Had lived among men in a brazen and unwomanly manner. Had flung herself into the mining business—the wildest and roughest kind of life to be found in the country, where she was constantly in contact with the hardest type of citizen, and with natives. She had knocked about the veld alone with men, frequented clubs and bars, smoked, drank, and no doubt listened to the coarse jokes of men (303).

In contrast to this harsh indictment, Desmond's former male comrades excuse her on the grounds of her personal qualities. They remember that, as the "White Knight", she had conformed to their standards for masculinity.

the grave yet gallant air he always wore, as of someone going into battle very shortly, booted and spurred and belted, with arms and accoutrements not quite visible to the naked eye, but there all the same. Other things men remembered too, and spoke of, were his pluck, his skill at riding, shooting, and fishing – anything that was doing in the sports line. He had not shirked his share of hard knocks in work or play. A bon camarade in any society; a bright companion on a dusty road; a good sort (256). (Stockley's emphasis)

On the other hand, Desmond's male comrades remember that, although she may have broken the letter of the law governing feminine propriety, she has not transgressed its

spirit. Crucially, she has been a “proper” woman, while behaving improperly, and without ever having adopted the conventionally prudish or judgmental stance of the domestic woman:

She didn't drink, but she hadn't preached at the men who did. She always cleared out when there was any kind of discreditable conversation going on, yet had managed never to give offence by doing so... She never joined in drunken revels, but it was on record that she had more than once picked up a drunken reveller in the street and got him home (256).

Defending her change in identity, Desmond recounts a list of British women who have successfully “passed” as men. She emphasises their patriotism, and the fact that they were indistinguishable from “real men” throughout their lives:

“[Dr James Barry] was a woman who died in the King's uniform after twenty years' service as an Army surgeon, and without anyone ever having the faintest suspicion of her sex while she lived. And what about Vincent (otherwise Violet) Lynch, the Irish 'soldier', killed fighting with the French (after seven years' service) in the Franco Prussian war? And Margaret Webb of the British Navy? and scores of well-known and hundreds of lesser-known cases where women have worked, travelled, fought, served before the mast, and, more difficult still, lived quietly in small towns and villages disguised as men and never been found out. (168).

While this passage suggests a patriotic rationale for women's masculine identification, Stockley, as sensationalist, simultaneously exploits the transgressive potential of her heroine's gender-bending. Thus Desmond, concluding her defence of female transvestites, refers “mischievously” to lesbianism, by implying that some transvestite women may have encroached on the erotic privileges of masculinity: “Some of them even married ... But I don't think I should go as far as that” (168).

Nonetheless, Desmond does not quite have what it takes to fool everyone into thinking her the epitome of colonial masculinity. She remains not-quite/not-male (Here I refer to Spivak's transposition of Homi K. Bhabha's notion of colonial mimicry, the “difference that is almost the same, but not quite” to describe the female individualist [126])

The “natives” with whom Desmond works on the mine are never deceived by her impersonation of the white man’s power: “She had always indeed been aware of a certain want of respect in the manner of natives towards her” (247). “Genuine” white masculinity is required to control African mine labour, as it is required in “Wild Honey” for power over the African landscape. Desmond’s mimicry thus simultaneously affirms that the British masculine ideal exists as an essential quality which cannot be faked, while simultaneously undermining its “genuineness” by suggesting that masculinity is a role which can be learned and acted.

When her identity as a woman is finally revealed, Desmond regrets that the pleasures of her life as a man are over – “Never, never again might she adventure as a man. That joy was finished and over” (316). This moves her from the ambiguously gendered (fe)male individualist to her feminine destiny as wife and mother. Desmond’s transformation back into a young woman (marked by a shift of pronouns that accompanies the transformation) happens, appropriately enough, in a maternity hospital. In the last scene of the novel, the homosocial love between the “male friends” Desmond and Druro is transformed. It becomes instead the heterosexual love between a man and a woman. In this scene, the “young Desmond” caresses a baby. She is a cameo of the feminine individualist returned to her maternal destiny, though not so thoroughly as to eradicate all traces of her former, inappropriate self:

And she laughed—Desmond’s deep bell-like laugh—and stood up, lifting the baby to the light. Then very tenderly she kissed its cross little face and held it against her own (328).⁶

Desmond’s femininity is thus as ambiguous as his masculinity, and, as a character, “she” constitutes both this narrative’s proof for and its rebellion against an essentially maternal feminine nature.

Conclusion

From a feminist perspective, the move from tomboy, or masculine identification, to “proper woman” can be read as the triumph of patriarchal definitions, and the re-imposition of social conformity. However, as Mitchell points out, “gentling” can also be interpreted differently, as an essential stage in the process of expansion of the range of definitions for acceptable femininity. From this perspective, “gentling” was crucial to the feminist project of inventing the “new woman” as something other than a monstrous aberration. Mitchell spells out the logic – “a career or an education does not destroy ‘femininity’” (1995:21). It is certainly true that, historically, the masculine identifications of young women gradually constructed a new definition of acceptable femininity, as evidenced by a 1895 conduct manual, Girlhood, which held that “[Girls] can become strong and vigorous and yet retain that essential womanliness” (qtd. in Mitchell 1995:109).

Mitchell’s open-ended observations about the “gentled” endings of girls’ fiction provide important points of inquiry for a study such as this. The appropriately feminised closure of the stories may well have facilitated women’s fictional, and, perhaps, historical move into the public sphere, by rendering such transgressions less threatening and inappropriate. Nonetheless, it must be noted that these endings may also have helped to ensure that the sphere of influence of domestic ideology (“that essential womanliness”) was extended, rather than overcome, by women’s symbolic move. Girls and women, instead of moving out of the private sphere, took its domestic ideology along with them in their forays into work, education and adventure. In the case of Page, whose heroines’ adventures consist primarily of importing domestic values into Africa’s wild spaces (as will be shown in chapters 5 and 6), this is certainly the case. A final verdict is more difficult in the case of Stockley, whose heroines are attracted to wild spaces because they reject domesticity. Nonetheless, her

heroines' primarily sexual adventures are also, often rather improbably, converted into domestic respectability.

Mitchell's disappointment at the "gentling" of the "new girl" into "a new and improved version of the Victorian ideal mother" is understandable (177). However, many feminists would not find the masculine identification of the "new girl" an unambiguously positive alternative to Victorian domesticity. A post-colonial perspective would share such unease, in its scepticism about the political functions of the British masculine ideal. Consequently, my acceptance of Mitchell's hypothesis about the expansion of the British women's sphere is informed by an awareness of the political implications of British women's mimicry of a masculine and heroic imperialism.

The precise meaning of such a British masculinity was violently contested in the controversies about Southern Rhodesia during the 1890s, and the following chapter considers Page's and Stockley's representations of heroic imperial masculinity in this specific historical and discursive context.

¹ In some respects, the "new women" who adopted the ideologies of Empire were, in Sara Mills' words "caught between the conflicting demands of the discourse of femininity and that of imperialism" (21). However, Mills's claims for the "difference" between women travel writers and male imperial writers are exaggerated. First, both the notion of a "discourse of femininity" and the notion of a "discourse of imperialism" ignore the important distinctions between various notions of femininity and various notions of imperialism. Secondly, her choice of women writers is rather too limited to justify her generalised (and almost essentialist) conclusions. It should be clear from chapter 3, in particular, that Stockley and Page adopt the imperialist voice in a variety of ways, and with certain adaptations, but with no less enthusiasm than their male counterparts.

² In contrast, accounts of the lives of early white Rhodesian female settlers emphasise that some of them adopted both conventionally feminine and rather unconventional forms of employment. Madeleine Heald documents the experiences of female teachers, post-office managers, taxi drivers, nurses, and among others, a single woman who buys and runs a farm and boarding house in Rhodesia (154), a female miner who prospected mine shafts in a bucket until the age of seventy (171), and a woman who made her own furniture, bricks, and roads (199).

³ The Scout movement was instituted in response to the anxieties about British masculinity which surfaced after the Boer War (discussed in the following chapter). Mitchell comments that, apart from worries about disloyalty and the general health of recruits from the working class, there were also concerns about "'effeminization' and 'degeneration' among the officer class" (117).

⁴ In this narrative, Stockley certainly conforms to the settler tendency, noted by Chennells, of accepting Selous's explanation of native superstition as a central cause of the risings:

As far as the novelists were concerned, the pleasingly arcane 'M'limo ordering atrocities from sacred caves, the tragic death of some and heroic resistance of other settlers, and the apparent blamelessness of the administration in provoking the whole affair provided perfect material for imperial romances (115).

⁵ The early "penetrators" of Africa did not find mobility as simple as the discourse and its metaphors imply. In contrast to this discourse of effortless mobility, it is interesting to read the German explorer Carl Mauch's irritations at the frustrations of mobility in his explorations. The frustrations he experiences when attempting to locate his position or reach his destination reach such levels that he is convinced that they are the result of a plot by the "natives" against him:

The traveller is inclined to believe that the natives make such winding paths out of spite; he suspects that, on this already troublesome journey, they also try to prevent him from taking measurements of distance and direction bearings, or, at the least, to make these almost impossible (240).

⁶ The shift between homosocial and heterosexual love happens very easily, as is indicated by this description of Desmond catching his first tiger-fish, with the help of Druro (whom Desmond marries at the end of the novel):

Desmond, his face dark scarlet, his squint forgotten, tongue out like a schoolboy, eyes gleaming with laughter and excitement, would gingerly wind up the line. Druro looking at him in such moments experienced a certain heart-warming.

"I love that kid" he said to himself (91-2).

Chapter Three:

Degeneration and Regeneration: Colonial Masculinity in the Rhodesian Romance

The study of the relationship of gender to the discourses of colonialism has become an increasingly popular field of enquiry. As Dorothy Driver points out “The place of women in the colonies was carefully defined and circumscribed within what was an avowedly masculine enterprise” (6). Granting these overall parameters, however, it nonetheless appears that white masculinity and femininity were more contested within the British colonial project than is commonly thought. Theorists such as Gayatri Spivak and Jenny Sharpe have (implicitly and explicitly), highlighted the ways in which domestic ideology came to inform understandings of British imperialism. As explained in chapter 1, Sharpe, using a bourgeois domestic definition of “feminine”, identifies a discursive shift towards a “feminised” version of imperialism. The previous chapter has explored the ways in which the “new woman”, in the period of Britain’s “New Imperialism” was both defined against and strove to identify with imperialist masculinity. This chapter, in delineating the masculine models with which the “new woman” often identified herself, shows that British masculinity was itself a highly contested category, given the role which played in colonialism by powerful domestic ideologies.

The heroic definition of nineteenth-century British masculinity originates in the “didactic-cum-adventure stories” of the British empire (Hammond and Jablow 101), which served as a form of “conduct literature” for boys (Bratton 81). The writers of such fiction included Rudyard Kipling, whom most critics consider a representative of the genre, and whose heroes were highly influential in establishing popular ideas of heroic British masculinity. J.S. Bratton describes Kipling's heroes as:

devoted to notions of duty, power, and responsibility, which are the values of an aristo-military caste: they define themselves by birth, by the profession of arms,

by the practice of certain sports and games, notably hunting, and by adherence to a set of rules of personal behaviour which can loosely be termed chivalric. (81).

Kipling's heroes are a recurring type found in most popular fiction for boys: "the every-inch a Briton, public school, empire-builders" (Hammond and Jablow 102-3).

Another important figure is H. Rider Haggard, whose novels clearly express the shift (identified by Gail Ching-Liang Low and Sally Mitchell) in England towards a more "muscular" and physically virile definition of masculinity. As pointed out in chapter 1, such popular fiction established, according to Low, "the heroic cult of English masculinity" which imagined a "rural regeneration" of racially degenerate urban stock in the pastoral Eden of Britain's colonial possessions (7,37). Racial degeneration was a central concept in the "scientific" system of racialist beliefs known as eugenics. At the turn of the nineteenth century, eugenics, though based on a misunderstanding of heredity and what later became known as genetics, became both a "popular creed and a movement", and offered the promise of "salvation" through racial improvement "from the joint menaces of modernization, industrialization and urbanization" (Barkan 69). As mentioned in chapter 1, Haggard's fantasy of pastorally regenerated British manhood was dependent in crucial respects on a notion of "noble" Zulu masculinity as a pinnacle of physical vigour and martial prowess.

While the colonies, as pastoral Edens, could be perceived as a source of regeneration, they could also signify as sources of degeneration when figured as a racially "other" space. Anne McClintock describes the eugenicist scenario of degeneration as "the historical possibility of racial decline from white fatherhood to a primordial black degeneracy" (100). John MacBratney identifies a similar emphasis in the portrayal of the heroes of British imperial fiction who "protected sedulously the image of themselves as young English gentlemen, guarding themselves against the possibility of 'going native' or otherwise being 'contaminated' by the Africans, Asians,

Native Americans or Pacific Islanders with whom they came into contact.” (278). In this context, and given the fact that the heroic discourses defined masculinity not only against, but also in terms of the racial “other”, the representation of English masculinity was fraught with contradictions and pitfalls.

The colonial experience was thus viewed by some as the cause of, and by others as the cure for the degeneration of British masculinity. In addition, the virility of Britain was also believed to be under attack by the forces of femininity. For fin-de-siècle England, “decadence and decline” (often merely the poverty caused by industrialisation and forced urbanisation) were perceived “as quintessentially feminine” forces (Low 18). According to this perception, culture generally was being invaded by “the feminine, a symptom and cause of degeneration, disease and effeminacy” (Pykett 42). In the face of this threat, eugenicists constructed the notion of Britain as a “virile race”, which implied that their dominance was predicated upon a range of masculine characteristics – they would lose their position of power if they became “idle, soft, selfish, hysterical, and undisciplined” (Mangan 129).¹

In Victorian England, the femininity feared as the cause of racial degeneration seems to have embraced two distinct signifiers: namely, its repressive domestic power, and its association with bodily sexuality. First, the growing power held by the respectable bourgeois woman within the domestic realm was resented. In this regard, Lyn Pykett cites an author’s complaint that the “repressive power of the British matron” would literally emasculate British culture (139). Second, there was outrage at the relatively explicit representation of feminine sexuality and the female body in fiction. This tendency was perceived to have been smuggled into Britain from the continent via Ibsen and French naturalism, and then unleashed in the “new woman” writing (qtd. in Pykett 42).

A response to both these perceived threats can be discerned in Haggard's King Solomon's Mines. David Bunn's analysis of this text highlights Haggard's perception of the threat of domestic femininity, and his anxiety about the feminisation of the novel genre. Haggard's resentment of the "power of the British matron" over the readership and authorship of his chosen genre, the romance, leads him to obliterate her from his narrative. His refusal to include a "petticoat" (Haggard's metonym for white woman) in his story removes it from the realm of the domestic romance, and plants it squarely in heroic territory. White women are effaced and heterosexual bonds make way for bonds between men. Nonetheless, Bunn identifies a "neurotic" anxiety about "how to deal with the threat of femininity" which structures the entire narrative as a story of male "penetration into a suggestively feminized locale" (7-8). As I have mentioned, McClintock reads this story as a reinvention of white patriarchal power in the face of overwhelming anxiety about "female generative authority" as represented by the witch-mother Gagool (235). In replacing Gagool with male authority and power Haggard is reinventing white patriarchy – the ailing metropolitan "tradition of fatherhood" (McClintock 240). McClintock's analysis, while aware that patriarchy does not consist solely in the struggles between "men and women", neglects analysis of the crucial relations "between men" which structured British imperial patriarchy.

Critics of Haggard, Kipling and popular boys' fiction note that the heroes in this tradition must often undergo the quintessential imperial "African experience" – time spent in Africa constitutes a male initiation rite which marks "the entrance of the Englishman into an exclusive and esoteric male society" (Hammond and Jablow 191). Eve Sedgwick's elaboration of the term "male homosociality" is useful as a way of understanding the patterns of "male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry" in the colonial setting (1). Male homosociality is a way of describing the "relations between

men”, which, in Heidi Hartmann’s definition of patriarchy, “though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men” and “enable them to dominate women” (qtd. in Sedgwick 3). Within the heroic romance, the tensions and pleasures of men’s mutual relations of solidarity and hierarchy within patriarchy are explored. However, in the colonial setting, this is a patriarchy from which females are temporarily absented – according to Sedgwick, the fantasy of colonial space in Kipling’s novel, *Kim*, allows him “to bracket the entire question of women”, concentrate on his imperial quest, and develop his relations with the male figures in the story (198). Kim asks: “How can a man follow the Way or the Great Game when he is eternally pestered by women?” (Kipling 366).

This network of racial, gendered and homosocial tensions come under the spotlight in Robert Dixon’s study of the adventure stories of the New Imperialism. His analysis of imperial masculinity is particularly helpful: “The ideology of imperialism placed incompatible demands on young men, requiring of them both an aggressive manliness, and a commitment to duty and domestic life” (33). I have suggested that the heroic and the bourgeois sub-genres of the novel align themselves with the opposing poles of this “incompatibility”. Within these sub-genres, then, one can identify the development, through two different narratives, of two distinguishable discourses of imperial manliness, which I have termed heroic and bourgeois. Nonetheless, despite this difference of emphasis, the conflict between the aggressive and domesticated qualities of manhood persists within both sub-genres. Dixon shows this clearly in relation to the stories from his chosen sub-genre (which are prime examples of the heroic romance):

On the one hand, pluckiness of spirit, physical prowess, and military derring-do were admired as the traits of imperial boyhood. On the other, young men were exhorted to become dutiful, domesticated husbands and responsible citizens. While the moral tone of most boys’ novels was disapproving of the more aggressive form of masculinity, their plots testify to its enduring appeal (30).

From these comments, it becomes obvious that the domestic imperatives which govern the bourgeois romance cannot be entirely evaded, and exist within the heroic romance itself. As Dixon suggests, however, the aggressively masculine plots of the sub-genre were the key to the popularity of the genre as a whole, and especially of the supposedly pernicious “penny dreadfuls”, which received severe criticism from contemporary commentators. In contrast, adventure stories judged sufficiently moralistic, or “wholesome” were believed to provide a useful conduit for the “excess” of boyhood, channelling it toward the Christian imperial ideal (31). Thus, in the construction of British masculinity, domestic values and ideals are crucial in differentiating acceptable masculinity from an excessively violent masculinity bordering on savagery. At the same time, as shown above, the mimesis of savagery was necessary to differentiate British masculinity from femininity.

Dixon notes that the “conflicting models of masculinity” (30) sutured by the heroic romance also resonate with the conflicts within British imperial identity at the time, where the strain between imperial (metropolitan) and colonial (in Dixon’s case – Australian settler) loyalties were beginning to be felt. This delineation is a crucial one in the explanation of tensions between imperial and Rhodesian masculinities, which are the focus of this chapter.

Exported to the Southern Rhodesian context, the physically virile ideal of masculinity realised itself uneasily somewhere between two discursive poles. British masculinity in this part of the empire could be epitomised by two opposing stereotypes: first, the upper-class, genteel, metropolitan Englishman, and, second, the disreputable, perhaps immoral, excessively rough and violent pioneer, situated on the periphery of empire. For convenience, I have labelled the former a stereotype of “imperial” masculinity, while the latter I term “colonial”. Various discursive hybrids of the two

poles are possible, such as the gentleman adventurer, or gentleman farmer. Although there is a great deal of overlap between the gentleman adventurer and gentleman farmer (especially given the leisurely nature of early Rhodesian farming) Gertrude Page, trying to satisfy both bourgeois and heroic imperatives, tends to prefer the gentleman farmer, while Cynthia Stockley is attracted to the more obviously heroic hunters and adventurers. Page manages the imperial/colonial polarity by having British-born heroes regenerated by the freedoms or labours of colonial life. This provides the key to her dual anxieties, first, about the potential effeminacy of the upper-class, constricted Englishman and second, about the potential villainy of the degenerate colonial pioneer. Stockley is concerned less with shoring up an ideal than with getting sensational mileage from its ambivalences – primarily, in this case, the ambivalence between the noble ideals and debased realities of the heroic realm. In Stockley's later novels, the pioneer hero becomes progressively further removed from the appearance, behaviour, and, eventually, class background of the gentleman, although his mystically innocent boyishness remains a constant. In the œuvres of both writers, the shift to a colonial, settler masculinity is marked.

On the one hand, Stockley and Page construct this colonial masculinity as the object of desire in their romances, but on the other hand, the anti-bourgeois tendencies of colonial masculinity can also be used to signify “the white woman's grave”, largely through the figure of the abusive colonial husband or unscrupulous pioneer. Both authors present vignettes of dystopic, violent and abusive marriages, or attempted seductions, where the romantic requirements of a “feminized”, nurturing masculinity do not temper the excesses of masculinity in colonial men (Radway).² For Page, such men are clearly defined as pioneer villains, while Stockley (when not wholly occupied with her

villainesses) occasionally exploits the gothic opportunity to blur the distinctions between heroic villains and villainous heroes.

Although they chose not to adopt it, an alternative vision of masculinity and femininity and of the entire colonial project was available to Stockley and Page in the highly visible fictions and polemics of Olive Schreiner. Schreiner's controversial novella Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland attacks the heroic masculinity and speculative financial designs of British imperialism and Rhodes' Chartered Company. Schreiner redeploys a virile femininity, domesticity and sentiment in her polemic, rather than allowing them to play their accustomed role in augmenting the settlements of capitalists and imperialists. However, Page and Stockley had very different intellectual and political interests to Schreiner, and both also had considerable financial interest in the popular success of their fictions. A combination of all these factors probably largely determined their choice of the bourgeois romance genre and their attraction to the heroic colonial and imperial discourses.

Contested Masculinity in Southern Rhodesia

Colonial masculinity is beset by the ambivalence between the promise of regeneration it offers, and the threat of degeneration it contains. A brief analysis of the discourses of masculinity produced by the British occupation of Southern Rhodesia in the 1890s reveals this repeated theme of combined promise and threat. Owing to the extension of the British empire and the rise of new colonial masculinities, the manhood of the English metropolis comes to bear the feminized taint of "home". The trope of England as "home" symbolically extends the sphere of feminine influence and domesticity to the boundaries of the nation-state, beyond which lie the realms of "real men" – the colonies. In the Australian context, Dixon reads Australian colonial masculinity in the fiction of Ambrose Pratt, who finds it necessary to expel the effeminacy of "the English dandy"

from the “bounds of Australian civility”, and in this way reflects “new imperialist assumptions about the declining moral fibre of the British” (“The unfinished commonwealth” 136). A variation of this anxiety about metropolitan masculinity is discussed by Anna Davin, who shows how “fears of national inadequacy” were sparked by Britain’s “poor military performance in the Boer War” (12). The eugenicist beliefs current at the time translated this fear into “a surge of concern about the bearing and rearing of children” and an “anxiety to build a race of strong men, to promote virility” (Davin’s emphasis) (12,57).

The Colonial Regeneration of Britishness: Robert Baden-Powell

Robert Baden-Powell, whose scouting movement attempted to build England’s boys into virile men, developed an enthusiasm for the regenerative potential of “life on the frontier” and the “traditional virtues of the trapper, pioneer and frontiersman” during his military career, which included his experiences in the Matabele War and the siege of Mafeking (Warren 240-1). An anecdote from Baden-Powell’s journal of the 1896 Risings, The Matabele Campaign, provides an early example of Baden-Powell’s attempt to graft the heroic “virtues” of the colonial pioneer onto a safely bourgeois, imperial British definition of masculinity. The anxieties that assailed both these masculinities are apparent from his definition of the attributes of a “proper” British officer:

“coolness”... stands for absence of flurry, pettiness and indecision; “common sense” for tactics, strategy, and all the supply arrangements; while “courage” means the necessary dash and leadership of men (88).

This concise definition is interesting not so much for what it says, but for the process by which it came to be formulated. Baden-Powell comes up with these characteristics in response to a colonial challenge, which threatened to split English masculinity between a bourgeois English version and its heroic colonial adversary. In response to this threat, Baden-Powell redefines a “British” masculinity to avoid any of the potential

“unmanliness” of the bourgeois definition. The new definition came into being through the effect of colonial “otherness”; nonetheless Baden-Powell presents it as properly and intrinsically “British”.

A letter to Baden Powell from colonial troops contains the challenge: The troops volunteer for service on the condition that they do not have to serve under what they term “eye glasses and kid gloves” (86) – metonymically, the upper-class and almost dandified imperial officer.

Baden-Powell explains away this challenge by sacrificing what are in his evaluation less “properly” British and thus deviant officer-types. These types include the “highly-trained officer, bound hand and foot by the rules of modern war” and the “old-woman type, fussy, undecided, running ignorantly into dangers he wots not of”. This “modern” masculinity is a caricature of a feminised, (overly) civilised, bourgeois masculinity. Threatened Imperial masculinity reclaims the signifiers of masculinity and mobility from the colonial and lower-class attack by disowning the “old-woman” type, and the type “bound hand and foot”. In retribution, Baden-Powell goes on to characterise the colonial forces as “motley” and semi-literate before he comes to the compromise definition of a seamless “British” masculinity quoted above (86). However, he is fascinated by the somewhat alien and primordial masculinity of the male pioneer, which, to Baden-Powell, links the British colonist, the Boer and the black colonial subject:

Every one of the few wayfarers, in waggons or otherwise, along the road is interesting, either as a hunter, gentleman-labourer, or enterprising trader. They all look much the same: Boer hat, flannel shirt, and breeches – so sunburnt that it is hard at first to tell whether the man is English, half-caste, or light Kaffir. (480)

Colonial Degeneration: Heroic and Bourgeois in the Rhodesian 1890s

Baden-Powell’s blurring of racial categories and awareness of class difference in his description of colonial masculinity provides an indication of its degenerate connotations. These connotations were frequently highlighted by the controversies over the military,

administrative and financial crises of the years 1890 -1900 in Southern Rhodesia. A closer inspection of some of these controversies reveals at their heart a struggle between heroic and bourgeois masculinities. The heroic tradition, especially in its untempered “penny dreadful” incarnation, permitted, indeed, required and celebrated the excesses of masculinity which characterised the first decade of British “speculation and violence” in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. A different (largely bourgeois) set of imperatives for imperial masculinity were in conflict with this tradition, however, and soon gained the upper hand as the administrative and financial chaos of the colony was revealed after 1896.

In this context, the Chartered Company was a highly ambivalent signifier. As the representative of moneyed British financial interests and as vehicle for Rhodes’s imperial dreams, it had significant claims to bourgeois respectability.³ However, on the other hand, public scandals about the Jameson raid, the suppression of the Risings, and various other “legitimate” administrative, police and army activities in the early years of Chartered Company government suggested connotations of an excessively heroic and bloodthirsty British savagery. This “excess”, much in the manner of that displayed in certain boys’ adventure stories, raised anxiety because Britain’s sons, in their heroic quest, were perceived to have escaped patriarchal controls, and to have disobeyed the Law of the Father, which tied them to domestic and bourgeois imperatives.⁴

As pointed out in chapter 1, Phimister’s characterisation of the first decade of British presence in Southern Rhodesia sketches an economy based almost solely upon a combination of speculation and violence:

as hopes of rich gold discoveries in Matabeleland flared and flickered, both the Chartered Company and the settlers turned to looting the Shona and Ndebele economies. Between October 1893 and March 1896 anything from 100000 to 200000 cattle were seized from the Ndebele. Armed gangs of settlers and contingents of BSA police equipped with Maxim guns, roamed across the countryside, taking what they could (16)

Witness also this report of Native Commissioner Weale in 1894:

I found that I had to try and gain the confidence of the natives that they might not run away on the sight of a white man; they were very timid, especially the women. The reason for this appeared afterwards to be on account of some of the police formerly stationed there making a practice of assaulting and raping any native woman they found in the veld alone (qtd. in Ranger 67)

As administrator, Leander Starr Jameson showed none of the restraint and commitment to bureaucratic procedure and protocol required by the British Colonial Office, and, as a result, was perceived as “an erratic adventurer prepared to gamble on the turn of a card” (Blake 152).

By 1896, Rhodes, the Chartered Company, and its administration, headed by Jameson, were considered, in certain quarters, to have gone beyond the pale of bourgeois legality and decency in their pursuit of profit and empire. Both settlers and Chartered Company had made themselves guilty, in the eyes of certain observers, of murder, rape and theft. Prominent among these observers were metropolitan figures such as the radical editor of Truth, Henry Labouchère, and, in South Africa, Olive Schreiner and her husband, Cron Cronwright-Schreiner.

In the case of Labouchère, his critique of Rhodesian masculinity can be summarised in the word, “filibuster”, which was much bandied about in allegations and counter-allegations at the time. The moral outrage prevailing in the metropolis depended crucially on this term, which refers to a person engaging in unauthorized warfare and depends on the spurious distinction between “war” and “war crimes”. The absence of official sanction for war, violence or theft was salient in this differentiation, rather than a critique of imperial violence in itself. (According to Gann, “Britain’s belief in her African mission stood unshaken” [140].) Frederick Courteney Selous countered these beliefs by effectively exploiting the conventions of heroic romance, in which such

masculine excesses were subordinated to chivalrous and imperial goals. The terms of this debate become particularly clear in the exchanges between Selous and Labouchère.

F.C. Selous: Filibustering Heroes and Chivalrous Savagery

Selous was a hunter, settler and soldier, and legendary icon of a later white Rhodesia, to whom he was “the rugged, famous white hunter and explorer who became scout and guide to the Pioneer Column, and whose unrivalled knowledge and experience was put to use and influenced the founding of Rhodesia” (Blair 1). He was also on the payroll of the Chartered Company, and was “easily used” by his more powerful and possibly more unscrupulous masters. His reputation for upright integrity allowed him to play, to some extent, the role of respectable propagandist in the “buccaneering world of Rhodes, Jameson and Harris” (Blair 12,14). His account of the Risings in Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia (with Baden-Powell’s Matabele Campaign) resonated with the discourses of the heroic romance, and, according to Anthony Chennells, played a crucial role in countering perceptions of Chartered Company mismanagement of Matabeleland and Mashonaland. Interestingly, Chennells suggests that the conventions and discourses of the (heroic) romance were vital to the general acceptance of these accounts, and that they provided basic assumptions about the Risings which were to structure many Rhodesian romances – i.e. that “opponents of Empire [were] unreasoning savages” (Chennells 115).

5

Selous’s account is written in response to the perceptions of Labouchère, who believed that the British in Rhodesia were “inhuman brutes” (Blair 18). A letter from Labouchère to the London Times alleged that the Anglo-Matabele war of 1893 was deliberately provoked by the British, that prisoners were shot, and that settler actions were characterised by cruelty (Blair 18).

Accusations such as these created anxieties about pioneer masculinity – was there anything to differentiate such behaviour on the part of the British from what was being termed the degenerate savagery of men like Lobengula? In Sunshine and Storm, Selous responds angrily to metropolitan critics (specifically Labouchère) who discredit the settlers by terming them “the white invaders”(4), and accuse them of slaughtering the “poor natives”,

with little or no provocation, in order to gratify the lust for blood, which certain people in England appear to think takes possession of their countrymen whenever they set foot on African soil (xvii).

His introduction juxtaposes heroic and villainous images of the pioneers, who are described as “a rough, hardy lot of men, whom some have called heroes and others filibusters” (4). Selous’s account was intended to leave the reader in little doubt that roughness and hardihood were essential characteristics of a heroic imperial manhood confronted by the forces of savagery, rather than being the signifiers of colonial degeneracy and bloodlust.

Sunshine and Storm is a defence of the actions of Rhodesian troops in the Risings, and denies that the cruelty with which his troops suppressed the Rising could potentially be attributed to the Victorian nightmare of racial degeneration (“going native”). According to Selous, chivalrous ideals – the protection of white women and children – inspired the settler cruelties. Nonetheless, Selous’s narrative reels from the shock of native insurrection, and his narrative of Rhodesian chivalry is not always entirely consistent. Occasionally, his discourse realigns the “savage” masculinity of the enraged colonial with an atavistic masculinity, common to all men.

Claiming to be “as humane a man as any of my critics”, he finds it necessary to defend his “savage deeds” by referring to a Social Darwinist conception of basic animal instincts “handed down to the most highly civilised races of the present day

from the savage animals or beings from which modern science teaches us that they have been evolved" (192,193), and awakened in him by Ndebele and Mashona

provocation:

somewhere deep down below the polished surface of conventionality there exists in [a man] an ineradicable leaven of innate ferocity, which, although it may never show itself except under the most exceptional circumstances, was and ever will be there – the cruel instinct, which, given sufficient provocation, prompts the meekest nature to kill his enemy – the instinct which forms the connecting link between the nature of man and that of the beast.(193)

In this way, Selous, like Haggard, redefines British masculinity in terms of the model provided by Victorian notions of "savage" masculinity. However, this redefinition does not extend to a sense of brotherhood in a shared, atavistic masculinity. For Selous, the "savage" excesses of violence reawakened in civilised men prove that they are in touch with their masculine "nature" and are thus morally blameless, while the "savagery" of the Ndebele and Mashona, as a mark of their degeneracy is, illogically, considered not only blameworthy, but punishable.

Adrian Darter: the Heroic Pioneers of Mashonaland and "the Real Filibuster"

Adrian Darter was one of the few members of Rhodes' Pioneer Column who recorded his experiences. His reminiscences, The Pioneers of Mashonaland, explicitly place the pioneers as heirs to the British heroic fictional tradition. He emphasises, in contrast to Baden-Powell's blurring of racial categories, the physical features which unambiguously identify the pioneers as conforming to an ideal British type. Eugenicist physical ideals current in England at the time contribute to Darter's description below:

a good-looking, upright lad, subtle of humour, beloved of Rhodes, and dear to many of us...a straight-featured, square-shouldered lad, of quiet determination and amiable disposition....young, athletic, tall and dark. He had a fine appearance and carried it with a charming manner. He gained the hearts of all of us...sunny-tempered, bright-eyed, straight-limbed young men (32-33)

The intertextuality which constructed and maintained the cult of masculine nobility around certain pioneer figures is apparent in Darter's description of Selous. Darter's

Selous, as the heir of a line of great Englishmen becomes “Alan Quatermain” – the hero of Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines.

I had spoken to Alan Quatermain on a kopje in his hunting ground, and the magnetism of the man lay in his mild serene speech and action...He stands 5ft9ins, wears a fair pointed beard and has fine blue eyes. The voice is musical and he is exceedingly modest. A lion-slayer and an elephant-hunter with the polish of Sir Philip Sydney, the dash of Sir Walter Raleigh, the intrepidity of Sir Francis Drake, and the temperate habits and tastes of an ascetic.(79)

This teetotalling Alan Quatermain, while the embodiment of almost maidenly innocence and refinement, is nonetheless capable of enviable feats of masculinity. Darter’s Selous is as far removed from the Victorian nightmare of the degenerate colonial filibuster as possible.

Nonetheless, moments in Darter’s narrative express the seductions of “filibustering” which motivated so many of the pioneers:

[Sergeant-Major Mahon] began to explain to me his intention after disbandment. He wanted to get together about thirty good men, raid cattle and share-and-share alike. It was lovely to listen to this Irishman. Here was the real filibuster (95).

For Darter, there is clearly a need to separate this disreputable brotherhood in looting from the honourable identity of the soldier (“Visions of raiding promptly left the Irishman’s brain and he was the soldier again” [95]). However, in practice, such a separation was not so easily effected.

Schreiners vs Chartered Company

Critics of the Chartered Company’s decade of “primitive accumulation” often berated the Company’s inappropriately or excessively heroic masculinity. In 1896, Schreiner and Cronwright-Schreiner authored a pamphlet entitled The Political Situation, which attacked the power of “monopolists” such as Rhodes to control the South African political situation for their own financial benefit. Rhodes’ invasion of Mashonaland and Matabeleland is stripped of the aura of imperialist sentiment, and comes in for a specific attack: “we are enabling [the monopolists] to grasp adjacent territories still uninhabited

by the white man" (15). This text uses metaphors through which the monopolist's greed becomes a ravaging, uncontrolled force of primal masculinity, and "sweeps bare the virgin land before him like the locust". This anti-capitalist polemic provides, with rare foresight, a political and economic analysis of the future in Southern Africa. However, despite its socialist leanings and concern for "the welfare of [the] labouring classes (12), the pamphlet's critique of Rhodes as a "foreign" capitalist, and its concern about "the ordinary colonist" as "successor" of the Chartered Company reveal that it was written with the interests of domestic capital at least partially in mind. The authors are concerned not so much about the ravished land or its inhabitants, but about the selfishness of the monopolist, who, instead of rendering the land fertile and productive for future settlers, "like the locust, leaves nothing for his successors but the barren earth" (16). Here again, a bourgeois model of masculinity (the capitalist as "husband" rather than ravager of the land) is preferred to the heroic model, which becomes a metaphor for what is wrong in Mashonaland.

The Chartered Company: Heroic to Bourgeois Capital

The Jameson raid into the Transvaal exacerbated Imperial unease about the "filibustering" masculinity of the Rhodesians, which was resolved by emasculating the Chartered Company: "The Chartered Company was promptly stripped of independent control over its military and armed forces and placed under the surveillance of a Resident Commissioner for South Africa" (Phimister 29-30). These changes initiated a shift in Chartered Company administration of the territory from the heroic years, with its "army of occupation" atmosphere" when the spirit of looting and speculation openly inhabited the Rhodesian establishment:

the "jolly, reckless spirit of adventure, which aims at making a million in half an hour and then clearing home to Piccadilly", had produced an utterly chaotic administrative situation. "Everything official here is in an absolutely rotten

condition”, observed William Milton, the Company's chief Secretary, shortly after his arrival (Phimister 30).

William Milton expressed the changes which he had to effect in terms of disciplining the “rampant” mode of heroic masculinity (“the Honourable and military elements”) in the administration, and transforming it into an appropriately bureaucratic form (Gann 146). Soon after this, the Chartered Company realised that settlement and productive capitalist development were essential to its financial survival (and, perhaps, to the “civilising” identity of imperial Britain) and this marked a transformation in its economic strategy towards an emphasis on bourgeois productiveness. To conclude this overview, during this period, the image of British masculinity in Rhodesia was neither monolithic nor unchanging, and the basic tension between heroic and bourgeois required a continual negotiation of racial, national, class and gender boundaries.

Masculinity and the Domestic Romance

In relation to these uncertainties about Rhodesian masculinity, Stockley and Page adopt different approaches to the construction of masculine colonial heroes as the objects of desire. Page generally enforces a split in stereotyping between her heroes, who are characterised by an upright, ideal masculinity, and her villains, who are marked by the excessive filibustering masculinity of the “pioneer”. Stockley, however, recuperates the “disreputable” masculinity of the Rhodesian “pioneer”. For her, these characters, no matter how degenerate, are redeemed by an essential “boyishness”, which safeguards them from colonial degeneration. Stockley’s hard-living, hard-drinking and undomesticated heroes display a saving innocence, which constitutes a similar strategy to that adopted by Haggard in his valorisation of the “boy-child” as founder of the new colonial Eden (Low 45). Consequently, Stockley’s stereotypes of Rhodesian masculinity can be relatively fluid – neither the appearance of her characters nor their behaviour demonstrates the fixity or reliability of the stereotype as used by Page.

Gertrude Page

Page renders her colonial heroes desirable by defining them against the “effeminacy” of the metropolitan Englishman, but also against a colonial degeneracy and excessive masculinity which is attributed solely to her favourite villain – the Rhodesian pioneer.

Heroes

Page, in Love in the Wilderness, her first Rhodesian novel, attempts to reconcile Rhodesian realities with the pastoral ideal. In this novel, the heroine, Enid, at first finds the men of Rhodesia disappointing. The neighbours do not satisfy her exacting requirements of class. One a “colonial” and one a mere “yeoman”, they do not “bear contemplation” (27). Another source of irritation to her are the black servants whom she terms “tiresome, dirty, incompetent black boys” (25). Enid also comes into contact with the dangerously degenerate masculinity of the colony. Unlike the neighbours, who threaten only her middle-class fastidiousness, the pioneer constitutes a serious threat to her virtue. She meets George Whiteing, a “masterful pioneer”, whose naked and predatory sexuality “strangely” attracts and repels her (15). Whiteing rescues her from a veld-fire and when she resists his forceful advances, attempts to kill her and then kills himself.

In contrast to these distasteful or dangerous realities, Meredith, the hero of The Edge O' Beyond, embodies both the romance otherwise largely absent from Rhodesia, and its promise of pastoral regeneration. The physical appearance of Page's heroes is a primary signifier of their ideal masculinity. Unlike the other colonists, Meredith is superbly masculine, a “tall, distinguished-looking Englishman, with delicate clear-cut features” (121). However, such aristocratic delicacy of feature could be read as verging too closely upon the feminine. Page adds, therefore, that Meredith's features are “saved from any taint of effeminacy by the strong jaw” (121). Meredith's eyes are the keys to his masculinity. “Quiet” and “inscrutable”, they disallow expression or penetration of his

inner being, shielding it from view. At the same time their penetrative ability allows him to bear “an expression of having seen all things” (121). Page stresses that Meredith’s grooming, unlike that of the uncouth neighbours, does not suffer degeneration as a result of his life in Rhodesia. He is “a calm, self-possessed Englishman, who ... saw no reason why his appearance should lack cleanliness, even on the veldt” (121). Nonetheless, after the Oscar Wilde scandal, such attention to personal appearance could jeopardise the perception of an unambiguous masculinity, and consequently Page prefaces her description with “there was no suggestion whatever of the dandy” (121). Meredith dedicates his life in Rhodesia to the mobility required of a hunter: “trekking – hunting – killing with tireless zest and endurance” (121). Page, as a writer of bourgeois romance, is ambivalent about this entirely unproductive lifestyle, which, while a “useless achievement”, nonetheless expresses the prerequisite strength, skill, health, and upper-class affiliations of her model British men (121). Page’s later heroes are more productive as farmers, but hunting remains integral to their lifestyle, as a residual signifier of heroic mobility.

Villains

Page’s male villains play out anxieties about colonial degeneration. Rhodesian “pioneers” such as Whiteing feature frequently as the villains of her novels, where they embody the cruelty and degeneracy of the filibuster. Whiteing is a fearless and “cold-bloodedly” cruel man and a “hard drinker and a hard swearer” (12). Nonetheless these qualities do not prevent him from being generally respected by other Rhodesian men – “on the whole he was liked. His stories were good, and his word with men could be relied on” (12). According to Page, the judgement of Rhodesian male society is no reliable measure of a man’s potential to maltreat a woman. When Page describes Whiteing’s appearance, the “strength” which characterises her hero returns, now

metamorphosed into the strength of a villain. Without the hero's redeeming "delicacy" of feature, the strength of Whiteing's mouth becomes merely "cruel and hard" (13). In addition, the self-concealing eyes that establish the ideal masculinity of the hero become sinister in Whiteing – "the metallic, almost sinister gleam in his gray eyes" (13). Page further establishes Whiteing's villainous status by demonstrating his callous and utilitarian treatment of women. The narrator comments that he "twisted women round his finger like flax, and cast them aside without the slightest qualm when it suited his purpose" (13). Whiteing justifies his aggressive pursuit and attempted seduction of the heroine by referring to the filibustering laws of the pioneer: "When I want a thing I go for it hammer and tongs. It is a little way of rough pioneers" (106). The "masterful pioneer", in the spirit of the filibuster, is ruled by no law but that of his own desires, and Edith knows that Whiteing will "ruthlessly [sweep] aside whatever [lies] in the path of his desires" (135). The absence of all refinement and respect for domestic values is the key to the villain's degeneracy.

Page's male villains play out precisely the anxieties about colonial degeneration which she denies can touch her heroes. Blake of The Pathway and Denison of "Where the Strange Roads Go Down" are almost carbon copies of Whiteing. They share similar histories and characteristics, and are also bent upon the conquest of young English girls. Important anxieties are resolved by villainising these characters, since their excessive masculinity has the potential to render the heroes effeminate by comparison. For example, in The Pathway, the villain, Blake dismisses the hero, Sir James, because "[w]e always thought him a bit soft in the early days, but now he's a positive old woman!" (70).

Regenerative Masculinity

Page's male heroes are without exception British-born. In her earliest novels, what attracts them to Rhodesia is the potentially free and heroic lifestyle possible there. In protest at the lack of freedom, mobility and independence they experience in England, they make their way to Rhodesia. In The Edge o' Beyond, Page describes her hero, Ted Burnett, as follows:

Clever, handsome, debonair, well-read, he demonstrated, unintentionally, a healthy form of the simple life, absolutely free of ... any mawkish effeminacy. When the growing restraint, and fettered schoolboy treatment of the [British] Army, fettered his independent soul overmuch, he resigned his commission and informed the astounded ears of his parents that he was going to farm in Rhodesia. (31-2)

Men escape the "restraint" and "fettered schoolboy treatment" of the British military in the colonies, where they accede to true manhood. It appears that nowhere in Britain, even in the army, can a man be a real man. In her early novels, Page populates Rhodesia with men of undoubted masculinity: "They really are men. I saw about half a dozen I could have fallen in love with on the spot, which speaks well for their stature, as I never look at a man under five feet ten" (The Edge O' Beyond 98). Men such as this, Page suggests, would certainly regenerate the British race.

Through the unassailable ideal masculinity of her heroes, Page ridicules metropolitan fears about the degeneration of British men in the colonies. In The Edge O' Beyond, the hero, Ted Burnett, receives male conduct books from his mother in England: "a long and carefully compiled list of suggestions headed Hints for a Moral Young Man in the Wilderness" (32). Burnett responds to such literature with humorous contempt. He burns the books, discards them or uses their pages as shelf liners – the moral masculinity of Page's heroes can in no way be seen to be in danger of degenerating. Page further ridicules the anxieties expressed by such conduct literature as irrelevant to "real men" of the colonies. The books are female-authored

("by Mother") or written by British males of uncertain masculinity ("the Rev Smirker") (32). They are consequently of no use to her hero, who understands instinctively the rules of conduct required of the British masculine ideal.

Burnett himself is a model of eugenicist masculinity, rather than a fulfilment of the capitalist dream of agricultural productivity by which, at this stage in Rhodesian history, the Chartered Company had begun to hope to redeem its fortunes. Burnett is a complete failure as a farmer, and Page explicitly states that "it is not as a farmer Ted Burnett is held up as a model" (32). Instead, it is his physical and moral health which qualify him for the status of model colonist. He is "a good all-round, healthy, vigorous colonist" (32) who is never tempted to "let himself go' in any single particular appertaining to the gentleman and sportsman" (33).

Strength, aristocratic features, grooming, physical mobility, moral purity, and directness of gaze recur throughout Page's fiction as characteristics of her heroes and positively portrayed male characters. For Page, these men define the English national character. In contrast to these colonial paragons of English masculinity, Page mocks "the stay-at-home" British male. Page's caricature of Basil, in Paddy the Next Best Thing, epitomises post-Anglo-Boer war anxieties about the effeminate and dandified "modern young man" of Britain:

he was only fitted to stand in a tailor's window, as a model of an empty-headed, well-dressed, curled and pampered modern young man, with about as much real manhood in him as a wax doll (167).

There is nothing pampered about Arthur Berridge of The Silent Rancher, who, according to Page, displays "that physically hard look that almost always denotes the Englishman, and is so attractive" (50). Page endows Berridge with "a square jaw that suggested cast iron, and a skin of rich, clear bronze" (50). Her hero, Ranger Metcalfe, combines physical health and heartiness with the "refined" aristocratic features so

beloved of Page – he is “brown and sinewy; deep-eyed, deep-chested, straight-limbed, with refined features, steady gaze ...” (62). The class-specific origins of these ideal characteristics become clear when Page identifies them with an upper-class ideal – “the best type of English public school boy” (*The Silent Rancher* 32). The upper class “boyishness” of Page’s ideal English male represents moral purity, freshness and power, which stand metonymically for the power and expansive energy of the English nation. Ranger Metcalfe, of *The Silent Rancher*, reveals “that same pleasing English freshness which makes a certain type of Englishman testify to his country’s power, wherever he may be, without uttering a word” (62).

Establishing Bourgeois Masculinity

In *The Silent Rancher*, an important shift takes place. As Page’s sense of a Rhodesian nation develops, her notion of Rhodesian masculinity changes. Metcalfe is a pivotal figure here, linking the more heroic figures such as Burnett and Meredith to Page’s later, more bourgeois, and explicitly Rhodesian figures. While Meredith is not depicted after his marriage, Burnett is shown married and settled on a farm in Somerset, England, where he breeds horses and discovers that he prefers his daughter, a “pink-and-white cherub” to either his “horses or his gun” (*The Edge O’Beyond* 279). However, his farming is not particularly productive, and his domestication is balanced against the bachelorhood of another character, Billy, who stays in Rhodesia and prefers to spend his money on a gun rather than saving it to support a wife.

In *The Silent Rancher*, Metcalfe runs a productive Rhodesian ranch, and marriage to the heroine, Evelyn, transforms his bachelor lifestyle. Here, for the first time in Page’s fiction, Rhodesia is the setting for the domestication of heroic masculinity. The reader is privy to Evelyn’s delighted realisation of her future role in domesticating Metcalfe’s bachelor lifestyle:

she looked tenderly around the little sitting room, noting tenderly all the trifling, homely details of his daily life – his pipes, his slippers, his papers, his bachelor attempts at makeshift home comforts. The mother-woman in her smiled tenderly over those makeshift home comforts; because she loved him truly, that mother-woman tingled to have her hands and head busy making them the real thing (301-2).

In contrast to Page's earlier notion of the importance of the mobility and aristocratic leisure possible in the colonial setting, she later comes to emphasise that it is labour which regenerates British men in Rhodesia. The bourgeois labours of Rhodesian military men, farmers and democratic politicians earns them the honorific title "pioneer", and, as founding figures of the new nation, they replace the overly heroic "real" pioneers.

Page's view of British masculinity regenerated through labour is present in Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy. A secondary character, "The Pal" remarks that before he came to Rhodesia he "belonged to the Weary Willy tribe" and had "never done a real day's work" in his life. However, Rhodesia restored him to an exemplary masculinity: "I picked up a habit of working from sunrise to sunset, and I even developed the sort of appetite that enjoys any bloody thing that's eatable. That's what Rhodesia has done for me, and I'm grateful to it" (29). Thus the hard-working farmer, rather than the roaming hunter, becomes Page's Rhodesian ideal.

This new emphasis on labour underlies Page's rewriting of the "Pioneer Column" – purged of its "filibustering" connotations. In The Rhodesian (1912), Page glorifies male colonists as "[t]hat quiet band of men whom we sometimes call 'The Path-finders'" (7). Page rewrites Rhodesia's "Pioneer Column" in more respectable guise by depicting the labours of this "band of men" who, according to her, make colonial settlements possible. It is they who "make the paths that the women and children will presently pass over" (7). This "quiet band of men" takes on more glamour in The Pathway, where Page describes a Rhodesian settler as a

splendid type of Kipling's Lost Legion – the sporting, dare-devil, younger sons who go out, to conquer the earth in an army that has no leader and no name, and of which the only headquarters is the dear little island in the northern Pacific [sic] and the only code of laws to “play the game”(19).⁶

Page also glamorizes Rhodesian homosociality in “Where the Strange Roads Go Down”. Here she develops her sanitized, non-filibustering version of the pioneer: “the bronzed, muscular young pioneer, whose ranks are swelled in greater numbers every year by the well-born Britisher” (79). The “quiet band of men” referred to in The Rhodesian has now become a “great army”. The army, however, does not wage a battle of destruction, but rather a battle of productivity and imperial expansion – Page’s male colonists are:

troopers, lieutenants, captains in the great army of the Pioneer-Colonists. Soldiers no longer of deadly weapons and hideous wounds, and wasteful destruction, but Soldiers of Progress, fighting the fine border fight on the outposts of the Empire, that brings the wilderness into line, and makes the waste places blossom as the rose (79).

This work ethic marks a clear shift from The Edge O’ Beyond, in which Burnett is primarily useful as a proof of the eugenic potential of Britain’s colonial possessions. In Page’s later novels, however, productivity has become as important as reproductive fitness. Page’s defensive justification of the notorious unproductiveness of white Rhodesian farmers provides an interesting moment in Jill’s Rhodesian Philosophy. Here Page attributes white Rhodesian farmers’ lack of productivity not to their degeneracy or idleness, but to their commitment to the maintenance of moral standards.

In one of Page’s very few references to the competition between white and black agricultural producers, the narrator, Jill, recounts an argument between a male character known as “The Pal” and a civil servant. The civil servant defends the fact that the Chartered Company buys mealies “from the natives” because they are cheaper than those produced by white farmers, and claims that white farmers could, in fact,

grow produce more cheaply. The Pal's rejoinder is telling: "Of course we could," ... "if we each bought half a dozen black wives to do all the work" (61).

Thus, after 1909, Page no longer valorizes colonial leisure in the way she was able to with Meredith and Burnett. However, she seldom accuses Rhodesian men of idleness, and only on a few occasions does she identify the racial division of labour which was the basic fact of Rhodesian life. Page's later novels are more pessimistic in their expression of various anxieties about the class origins and propensity for work of Rhodesian settlers. This pessimism allows Page a rare moment of irony about her stereotype of ideal masculine nobility. An English woman comments enthusiastically to Joe Lathom, in "Where the Strange Roads Go Down" on the type of men she associates with Rhodesia: "You seem to have such glorious men out there. I've read about them in Rhodesian novels. All good-looking and aristocratic, and brave, and interesting." (47). Joe's reply is sarcastic:

"I know those novels. Men who turn out marquises, and dukes, and things. Well, there are a few fine, aristocratic fellows, if you have the luck to come across them; but the average settler is a very ordinary person, usually coatless, collarless, unwashed and unshaven. They're good fellows, a lot better than the average anaemic, stay-at-home Englishman, most of them; but they are not in the least like the heroes of lady novelists, and they need to be in their own environment to be appreciated" (47-48).

Cynthia Stockley

Stockley, through her early imperial heroes such as Evelyn Carson (of Poppy) and Gayer Waybrant (of Virginia of the Rhodesians) constructs a heroic masculinity.

However, she does not make Page's nationalist shift to the bourgeois gentleman farmer or focus on the racially regenerative powers of colonial masculinity. Instead, she becomes more and more fascinated by the ambivalences of heroic masculinity, and the "degenerate" pioneer becomes central to her construction of a specifically Rhodesian identity.

Heroic Imperial Mobility

Evelyn Carson, the hero of Stockley's first novel, *Poppy*, demonstrates an association between mobility and masculine sexuality. Carson's lifestyle as freelance explorer and soldier depends on his effortless mobility. He alternates "intervals of active service" in "all the rumpuses of the last fifteen years – Uganda – Matabeleland" with expeditions as an explorer "into the wild deeps of Africa, where no one has ever been before" (178). On these expeditions, Carson "discovers" a "new quadruped and a new tribe of natives". He also single-handedly establishes a new African British protectorate in "Borapota". The protectorate "will eventually extend the Empire by sixty thousand square miles, and add a country crammed with coal and iron and ivory and a dozen other lovely things to the pink part of the map" (178-9). Having opened the roads to Borapota, and having facilitated the mobility of lesser mortals (by laying the railway), Carson will stay there only as long as it takes to tame Borapota:

There'll be plenty to do turning that little sixty thousand square miles into a civilised centre, now that we've got the roads open. In five years' time we shall have the rails laid right to the capital, and the mines in full swing. That's the time I shall make tracks for newer scenes. But in the meanwhile it's fine, Bram. The fellows that make pioneers are the right stuff – you know that. It's the people who come up after the work is done who stick in my gizzard. (291)

Ironically, the heroic pioneering masculinity of Carson and other similar characters (such as Vigne of "Wild Honey") depends precisely on the "wildness" of the landscape which they conquer. Once the land has been conquered, there is no more proof of their masculinity, and they are indistinguishable from the settled, bourgeois latecomers. Therefore they move on to tame "newer scenes". Low observes a similar phenomenon in Kipling's travel writing, where, though Kipling applauds the modernising efforts of British engineers in the independent Indian states, he finds the modernised regions of least narrative interest:

Paradoxically, given the nature and effects of their modernising tasks, the land which bears least trace of the [engineers] is presented as the most desirable.

Because travel writing relies on the difference between the home one journeys from and the place one travels to, the pleasure of the Orient is inversely proportional to the penetration of colonial civilisation (140)

There are parallels between the hero's mobility and his sexual prowess. The heroine, Poppy, is kept locked away from the world by her sinister guardian, Luce Abinger. Carson, however, meets, seduces, and impregnates Poppy one evening when the gate to Abinger's garden is left unlocked by accident. Appropriately in this context and given his easy mobility through Africa, Carson's nickname, Intandugaza, is explained by the narrator as "all gates open to him" (159). Poppy, however, translates the nickname as "beloved of women" (159). This polysemy attributes to the hero both effortless physical mobility and effortless access to and power over women. Carson's heroic powers are the key which "opens" the wild landscape and enthralls women. This sexual and imperial potency is established most firmly because recognised by Zulu servants, who articulate the potency of white masculinity in the tongue of Britain's preferred warlike imperial "other".

Heroic Reprobates

After Poppy, Carson's broadly imperial heroism is replaced in Stockley's fiction by an ambivalently expressed Rhodesian masculinity. Stockley's heroes, despite their reprobate appearance and pioneer lifestyle, contain an essentially noble core of incorruptible boyish innocence and purity. Her narratives delight in exploiting the heroic/bourgeois tensions which are attendant upon this ambivalent masculinity. On the one hand, the heroes are attracted to the disreputable homosocial "band" of fellow adventurers, while on the other hand, they can be recuperated (by the heroine) for a modified version of domesticity and a more respectable bourgeois heroism. Again, as in the case of Carson, the ultimate proof of their essential masculinity is recognition in the eyes of the racial "other".

Anthony Kinsella

The hero of The Claw, Anthony Kinsella, and its villain, Maurice Stair, represent opposing poles of masculinity. However, masculinity for Stockley is a shifting signifier, capable of deception, redemption, and disguise. Kinsella departs from the conventional appearance of a hero – “he didn't look the least bit like the hero of a romance” (24).

Kinsella's appearance is so unconventional that he could easily be confused with various colonial disreputables: “he might be a horse thief, an escaped convict, an IDB, or a pirate on holiday” (24). Kinsella also reveals himself immediately as a “womanhater, who could only be nice to horses” (26). He displays the exaggerated restlessness of Stockley's heroes – he is “not an army man as English people understand the term”. His mobile and unpredictable career allowed him to move between “various bodies of African Mounted Police”. Later, he intersperses periods of making and losing money “in the gold and diamond capitals” with expeditions into “a lonely part of the veldt” or in “some old corps of his” (70). It is noticeable that, in comparison to Carson, whose mobility is in the service of a confident imperialism, Kinsella's mobility shows signs of directionlessness, and his command of the African territory disintegrates during a period of insanity.

Kinsella loses his sanity after an ambush in the Anglo-Matabele war, and is captured by the Matabele, who are instructed not to kill him by Lobengula. Despite his temporary disorientation and loss of control, his masculinity, as potent signifier recognised by the racial “other”, remains his strongest shield: “They are afraid to kill him ... because he is a great white man, with strong eyes that make them afraid to strike” (238).

The appearance of ideal masculinity, usually such a reliable indicator of heroic status, proves deceptive in The Claw. While Kinsella is a hero in the guise of a villain, the villain is disguised as a hero. The most truly disreputable character in this novel is

Maurice Stair, who appears superficially to satisfy the requirements of ideal British masculinity. He is able to assume a “frank manly air”, and a “half-modest, half-chivalrous smile” (205), and this deceptive appearance tricks Deirdre into marrying him, when she believes that Kinsella is dead. After Deirdre’s marriage, however, she discovers that Maurice is “not straight”, in the eyes of other men, and that he is a secret drinker, and a coward – “he hasn’t the pluck of a louse”(194). After this revelation, Deirdre also notices the tell-tale signs of degeneracy and effeminacy in Maurice’s previously ideal masculine appearance:

His mouth hung open, and I saw that it was weak and loose; that his dark skin was yellowed, not tanned, that his eyes were set with a sinister closeness to his handsome thin nose; that under them lay the mean lines of secret sins; that his hands were not the staunch, square hands of a man that could work for a woman and take hold of her heart and keep it for himself against all comers; they were long and cruel and womanish, and looked as though they knew only how to tear and wring and destroy (203).

In addition, Maurice is an idle “waster” who neglects his duties, and is paid five hundred pounds a year by his uncle in England “to keep out of his sight” (235). Deirdre’s feminine influence and determined resistance of his lecherous advances eventually manages to cure Maurice of his vices. Six months after her arrival, both Maurice and his camp are transformed:

Under a smart officer, full of initiative and invention, the best-bred wasters in the world are bound to “buck up” and look slippy. (233)

He had the clear eye, healthy skin and quiet firm air of a man with a purpose....He drank his whisky and soda from his own sideboard like a sane and decent gentleman. No more shirking and shelving of duties, but rather a seeking of fresh ones. No more sloth and skulking and petty sins. The old vices and weaknesses were underfoot at last (234).

Eventually, at the end of the novel, Maurice is killed, rescuing Kinsella. The self-sacrifice that this entails restores Maurice to an ideal masculine nobility and purity – he resembles “Galahad with the beauty of death on him” (254). Deirdre’s feminine influence on Kinsella also returns him to a boyish purity and religious belief. Kinsella

swears to Deirdre that “[f]or you I will go back to my boyhood’s dreams – to the old sweet creeds! I will wipe my life clean of sins, and make it worth your beauty and purity”. For Stockley, Rhodesian masculinity, no matter how degenerate, is capable of redemption, and the catalyst to that redemption is the heroine. This is particularly clear in the case of Lundi Druro of Stockley’s short story “The Leopard”, and its sequel, Ponjola.

Lundi Druro

Druro is possibly Stockley’s least respectable hero. In the short story “The Leopard”, he is by turns accused of murder and caught in a suicidal drunken depression, and neither quality is entirely in conflict with his heroic masculinity. Lundi lives in a world to which women are incidental:

He was a man's man. He liked women, and his eyes always lit up when he was with one, but he forgot all about them when they were not there, forgot them easily in cards and conviviality and the society of other men (81)

Druro’s power over other men within this male sphere verges on the uncanny. He exercises “a tremendous personal magnetism upon other men” (81). This potent magnetism (between Druro and other men) extends beyond mere friendship: he “attracted them, amused them, and influenced them, even obsessed them” (81-2). The extent to which Druro influences the actions of other men “almost amount[s] to mesmerism” (82). Gay, the heroine of the short story, senses that this “power of obsessing the minds of other men” is “becoming a temptation and obsession” to Druro. She feels that it is dangerous to him because of the vices associated with Rhodesian male society. For Gay, Rhodesia is “a country where men drink and gamble far too much, and are fast in the clutches of these vices before they realise them as bad habits” (82). Gay also experiences exclusion from the masculine sphere because of the mutual protection and solidarity between men in the face of women’s inquiries. Such protection denies

women admission to and knowledge of the activities of men when necessary: "Men have a curious way of standing back to back when women want to find out too much"(95). In this novel, Stockley identifies a point where addiction to the excesses of masculinity undermines true manliness. When Gay deduces that Lundi has been drinking and gambling again, she denies him the masculinity associated with being a "man's man" (98). Instead, she insists that "he belonged to his sins, and his weaknesses and failings" (98). These vices lead Druro to inflict seemingly fatal injuries upon an Australian miner in a brawl. Expecting to be charged with murder, Druro loses the taint of excessive masculinity, regaining, through his brave acceptance of the consequences of his deed, the boyish charms of "a bright-haired, innocent, wistful boy" (101). For Stockley, this "boyishness" signifies an essential innocent and untainted masculinity – an essence that resides in all men and which they never wholly lose, regardless of how far they sink on the scale of degeneracy.

Druro's world of drinking, mining and gambling sets the scene once again in the sequel, *Ponjola*, the story of Desmond's cross-dressing adventures in the hard-drinking world of the Rhodesian small-worker. Here Stockley once more articulates the notion of the essential boyishness which keeps colonial reprobates from degeneration. In this novel, Druro attempts to drink himself to death, aided and abetted by his friends (all more or less alcoholics), who drink "for the love of it" (62). A fundamental innocence, however, is the defining feature of this masculine society. When the men go on trips into the countryside, they become "jolly boys off on a picnic" (75). Even when Druro is completely drunk, this innocence is apparent: "there were instants when the lineaments of a happy boy gleamed behind the dark flush of the drunkard" (198). Eventually, however, in a bourgeois turn, Desmond rescues Druro from his alcoholism, and helps to ensure his future prosperity as farmer and miner.

Secondary Characters

Stockley's secondary masculine characters, who represent Rhodesian society, are even more anti-bourgeois, disreputable and unconventional than her heroes. Rhodesian settlers are, for Deirdre (of The Claw), both unsettled and unsettling. She groups them together as "members of that great Legion of the Lost ones, always to be found in the advance guard of pioneer bands" (162). These men, according to Deirdre, have loosened the ties of "home" and feminine domestic power – they are "men who have strayed far from the fold of home and love and women folk" (162). However, Deirdre includes this disreputable brand of Rhodesian colonist within the fold of ideal British masculinity. She depicts them as having cut the umbilical of womanly apron-strings tying them to "home"; but the discourse of masculinity, as a more powerful tie to Britain, remains unbroken. All these disreputables, according to Deirdre, "carry about, hidden in the depths of their hearts, verses, tag-ends of sonnets, valiant lines from the men's poets – Byron, Henley, Kipling, Gordon" (163). The literature of "the men's poets" acts as a purifying force for these colonial degenerates. Their "profane lips" recount morally uplifting lines from these poets – "of the strong and chivalrous and the pure in heart" (163). Stockley's distance from Virginia Woolf is apparent here, in that, when she calls Kipling a "men's poet" it is not intended in any derogatory fashion, but rather to applaud the truly masculine qualities of his verse, and by implication to condemn all poets who do not qualify as "men's poets" to some vague realm of effeminacy. Ironically, Stockley herself uses epigraphs from Kipling more often than from any other poet. She clearly does not see herself or the female readers of her romances excluded from his audience simply because he is a "men's poet". Here once again, the flexibility of fantasmatic identification in the popular romance is apparent.

I show in chapter 5 that Stockley's tolerance for the excesses of heroic masculinity does not fully embrace either alcoholism or idleness. For instance, in The

Claw, the narrator, Deirdre Saurin cynically observes the dependence of white men on black men in matters of manual labour: "A peculiarity about [white] African men is that they have a great objection to carrying anything. They would far rather argue about it for two hours and then spend another two looking for a [black] boy" (81).

Needless to say, Stockley's cynical perspective does not extend far enough to note the irony of the term "boy" applied to the man who, in fact, performs the work.

Masculinity and Violence

It would be surprising if the rapine and plunder wreaked by the Rhodesian "filibuster" did not also manifest itself in domestic violence against white women, and, as mentioned above, the rape and abuse of black women is well documented in Rhodesian historical sources. Marriage is the goal of the woman's romance form, and these romances construct desire for a colonial brand of masculinity. However, they also incorporate a feminist critique of the filibuster's domestic violence in the colonial marriage.⁷ For Page and Stockley, silent about the abuse of black people generally, and black women specifically, the horrors of the "filibuster" are primarily horrible when he directs his violence at white women. This phenomenon is most apparent in Page's villainous "pioneers", and in certain other negatively portrayed masculine characters.

Disturbingly, in a partial failure of sentimental and domestic values, sometimes the threat and aura of violence around the hero constitute an essentially desirable component of his masculinity – Stockley occasionally suggests that the reader should learn to desire the "masterful hero" in all his violence. As I will show below, Stockley's ideal figures of desirable masculinity are often equally as violent as her villains. Page, on the other hand, follows the "purity" school of "new woman" writers by attributing a bestial and savage masculinity to certain men.

The Silent Rancher is a “purity” novel where the heroine must learn the lessons of degeneracy in order to uphold the imperial values of racial and sexual purity and to fulfil her imperial destiny of regeneration. In a sub-plot, Page sketches the white woman’s colonial nightmare in the marriage of Elaine and James MacNair. James MacNair chooses to settle in Northern Rhodesia in order to facilitate his domestic violence against his wife – “to give his cruelty full play” (201). Besides the fact that “lonely places” (201) help to conceal MacNair’s cruelty, Page posits certain degenerative forces inherent in the South African environment. (Page’s use of “South Africa” to refer to Northern Rhodesia is indicative of a geographically vague imperial perspective which allows her, at this stage, to equate “Africa”, “Rhodesia”, and “South Africa”.) These forces engender cruelty towards woman in men such as MacNair: “in South Africa there is a germ of irritability and even brutality, which makes fiends of a certain type of man” (199). This particular “type of man” departs from the ideal of public school boyishness by which Page measures her heroes – James MacNair is remembered as a “fiendish bully” (201) at school. According to Page, the only comfort to abused wives such as Elaine MacNair is the fact that domestic violence is pervasive in the colonial setting – “very much the order of the day”. Abused wives are “probably no worse off than their neighbours” (200). Page comments, melodramatically, on the helpless bondage and isolation which she sees as the fate of such colonial women:

it is only too terribly possible in the lonely places of the earth for a man of unbridled passions to ill-treat to the utmost limit of his bent the woman who has left all her friends to go with him, if it happens that he is a tyrant and bully, and she has an unfortunate knack of irritating him, or is helpless and frail and timid (200).

To Page, the continuum of abuse begins with sins of commission – male violence – and ends in sins of omission – neglect. Even ordinary, non-villainous Rhodesian settlers are capable of neglecting their wives. Observing the lack of

romance in her sister's marriage, Enid (of Love in the Wilderness) comments bitterly that "sweet-tempered, unselfish women quickly seemed to become the white slaves of their household, in spite of devoted husbands" (72).

In Stockley's novels, however, the extreme masculinity of the colonial ideal sometimes excludes those nurturing qualities which writers such as Radway have isolated as essential to the successful romance. As a result, the distinction between the violent or unsympathetic husband of the colonial nightmare, and the desirable hero representing the masculine ideal cannot always be sustained. In Virginia of the Rhodesians, the irrepressible and independent Virginia is "tamed" by the hero, Gayer Waybrant in the last few pages of the novel. The force of masculinity by which he achieves this feat is intended to be desirable:

I have a feeling that I should like to kiss you whether you like it or not, and a desire to club you whenever you are insolent. Why is it that you rouse all the primitive instincts in me? There are times when I long to take you by the hair of your head. (292).

An archaic and violent "primitive" masculinity arises in the civilised hero, much as it arose in Selous and his troops. This aligns Waybrant with other violent masculine characters such as the wife-beater, Kniven Kallender. Kallender shares the masculine homosocial space and the ideal appearance of the hero:

Kniven Kallender's broad, sweet smile, that made him so popular in the world of men, and the suave courtesy of his manners to women, had never taken me in. I had seen the big bruises disfiguring the white flesh of Dorothy's body, and I had cried over her when she had lain in pain utterly unable to rise from her bed. The secret of it was that he was an intermittent drunkard, and cruel and uncontrollable in his drunkenness. No one ever suspected this. (18)

One difference between this violence and the violent discourse of Gayer Waybrant is the absence of feminine desire. The following piece of dialogue shows Virginia protesting against Gayer's forcefulness, and his attempt to make her docile:

"...You will marry me. And I think it will be to-morrow morning. You are to wear that little cambric gown, the colour of primroses. I like the way it hangs."

"I won't marry you, and I hate that gown. It makes me look meek."

"You've got to be meek." ...

"I'm not sure that you won't beat me."

"Neither am I." (293)

Virginia responds to this half-mocking, half-serious threat of violence with both fear and desire. She hears "a triumphant, masterful note in his laughter that frightened me, while it set my heart rocking and quivering with gladness" (293). Kniven Kallender's violence forces his wife to run away with another man, because his violence is inspired by alcohol; but Gayer Waybrant's violence is the violence of passion, and is thus desired by the heroine.

The writing of Stockley and Page stands in direct opposition to the morally superior stance of racial sympathy which white women writers are often, stereotypically believed to adopt. For Stockley and Page, the violence of colonial men against "the natives", although occasionally a marker of degeneracy, is not consistently seen as immoral, and can enhance masculinity to the extent that it is one of the keys to heroic status. One of the first actions that establish Kinsella as hero of The Claw is that he violently "punishes" a coloured transport rider. This man, in his opinion, has not treated the heroine with the appropriate respect due to a white woman – "These men have to be taught their duty to white ladies" (38). In Stockley's "Three Farms", Cathreen overhears the tones of mastery and control in her husband's voice as he commands "the natives" outside, and is reminded of her love for him:

[his voice] had tones in it that could curl round her heart as if he had put his strong brown fingers into her breast and taken hold of it. She quivered, and turned her face to the wall (15).

Olive Schreiner: An Alternative Perspective

White women's representations of colonial masculinity are without doubt wider in range than those discussed above. However, a delineation of the entire spectrum does not fall

within the scope of this dissertation. It is interesting, however, to compare the exceptional response of Olive Schreiner's Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland to the stereotypes of heroic masculinity so dear to Stockley and Page. In this novella, Schreiner uses the traditional religious form of allegory to protest against Rhodes' invasion of Mashonaland and Matabeleland and his suppression of the Mashona and Ndebele Risings. This novella was a controversial exposé of what Schreiner saw as the scandal of violence and inhumanity in the colonisation of Rhodesia – rape, murder, enslavement, pillage and dubious financial wheeling and dealing. After writing it she said, "The book ... has cost me more than anything I ever wrote, and I am broadening my back already for the Chartered Company's attacks" (qtd. by Marion Friedmann 17).

The public impact of the book was considerable and elicited many violently negative reactions. As Sally-Ann Murray points out, Schreiner claims factual veracity for her story, based on personal knowledge of the type of men who invaded Mashonaland and Matabeleland:

I have known intimately such numbers of young men from up there [in the North], from their letters, the journals they have sent me, and from the conversations we have had with some of them in Kimberley when they came down. It would take me too long to tell you about things, but Trooper Peter Halket is a very toned down dead picture of the reality (qtd. in Murray 14).

Schreiner's less than complimentary depiction of the men in Rhodes's "pioneer band", inspired anxiety about colonial British manhood – an anxiety shared even by Schreiner's fiercest attackers. According to Marion Friedmann, a reviewer from Blackwoods' Edinburgh Magazine was compelled to admit the power of Peter Halket's depiction of "the wild soldiers on the borders of savagery, without principle or moral guidance ... except a determination to grow rich". Blackwoods' reviewer goes on (on behalf of "families with sons out there") to express a deep anxiety about the precariousness of British manhood when exposed to the corrupting influence of such a life and states the

urgent need to find out whether “our sons are trained in South Africa to be like that” (Blackwoods' emphasis) (qtd. in Friedmann 17). This response suggests that Schreiner's novella deliberately activates the bourgeois codes of gentlemanliness and decency in service of her polemic.

Murray notes that Peter Halket, Schreiner's young British soldier in Mashonaland is “deliberately” not presented as the glamorised “rugged frontier [adventurer]” or “stereotyped colonial hero” (14). He is separated from these types by his working class background, his sensitivity and vulnerability. Colonial expansionism is demystified as Schreiner reveals Halket's participation in the sordid and criminal “speculation and violence” that characterised the first decade of settlement in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. Halket dreams of obtaining some of the land expropriated from the Mashona and Ndebele. He then plans to become rich by setting up a bogus company and selling shares to an unsuspecting British public (32-34). This is “speculation” of precisely the kind that provided the original capital for the Chartered Company (Phimister 1988).

Halket also participates in the violent atrocities which accompanied the suppression of the Risings – the burning of “the natives' grain”, British attacks on “native women and children”, including the rape of a “young and pretty” black woman with a “baby on her back”, and the dynamiting of the caves in which the Mashona took refuge (36). However, Schreiner presents Halket as psychologically vulnerable and haunted by memories of this violence:

he saw the skull of an old Mashona blown off at the top, the hands still moving Then again he was working a maxim gun, but it seemed to him it was more like the reaping machine he used to work in England, and that what was going down before it was not yellow corn, but black men's heads (36).

In the heroic discourses, the body of the (living) black man serves to establish white men (their victors) as undeniably masculine. Low notes that pictorial

representations of the black male warrior body were “crucial to the heroic narrative of the white man writ large” (55). Such representations were prominent features, not only of journalistic representations of colonial wars, but of the texts of Baden-Powell and Selous. In Schreiner’s text, however, the bodies of black men take on an entirely different significance, as in the gruesome depictions of butchered corpses quoted above. Most notable, however, is the notorious “Matabeleland photograph” which was used as frontispiece to the first edition of the novella. In this photograph the lynched bodies of two black men and a black child hang from a tree as white men look on. This piece of evidence was Schreiner’s most controversial reply to a discourse of white “heroism” built on black male bodies.

Besides this attack on colonial British “manhood”, Schreiner’s story differs in other important ways from the type of fiction written by Stockley and Page. In Trooper Peter Halket, Schreiner sketches in bold strokes the powers of the feminine figure, which are based on the domestic powers of femininity and sentimentality – qualities generally effaced from the sphere where heroic colonial masculinity reigns. Unlike Selous, whose repetition of the phrase “white women and children” merely emphasises the absence of women as speakers and actors in his account, Schreiner’s feminine figures function to profoundly unsettle the order of colonial male violence, and to reveal the underside of British military homosociality.

The first of these feminine influences is Trooper Peter’s mother – the memory of whom haunts him as he sits alone in the alien African veld. Schreiner returns the infantilised would-be colonial hero to the domestic space of feminine power and sentimental values:

he saw his mother standing at her cottage gate when he came home in the evening, and he felt her arms around his neck as she kissed him tonight he wished for her as he used to when he was a small boy and lay in his bed in the next room. (30-31)

Dependent upon his mother, who he imagines providing for him, and tucking him into bed at night, Peter appears infantilised, a naive and boyish creature. This “boyishness” is very different to the independent “public school” boyishness of Page and Stockley’s heroes.

Schreiner reveals a feminine origin for the codes of British gentlemanliness “[my mother] was always drumming into me; – don’t hit a fellow smaller than yourself; don’t hit a fellow weaker than yourself; don’t hit a fellow unless he can hit you back as good again” (51). She also points out polemically that these standards of gentlemanly behaviour and “fair play” do not govern British military behaviour in Mashonaland, which is likened to the illegal raiding of a “pirate” (another incarnation of the “filibuster”) (73). The villainy of the pirate puts him in the category of beast, rather than man, excludes him from the circle of English manhood – “these men are English; but not English-men” (73). Finally, the Jesus figure who bears the moral message of the novella is himself identified with the powerful feminine figure of the English mother: “Do you know”, [Peter] says to him, “I’ve been wondering ever since you came, who it was you reminded me of. It’s my mother” (48).

McClintock has noted Schreiner’s splitting of “the ambiguous power” of the mother into a “sanitized” loving English mother and a hostile and punitive black woman:

Schreiner’s redemption of the white mother is won at the expense of a double disavowal: denial of the historical memory of her own mother’s anger and denial of the agency of black women – beyond their subservience, that is, to the logic of the colonial narrative (269-270).

This duality between loving English mother and black woman is clearly present in Trooper Peter Halket. In this case, however, Schreiner’s vehemently anti-imperial stance means that she does not deny agency to her black feminine characters in the same

way as she does in much of her other fiction. In this story, the black women are “nigger gals” whom Peter “acquires” much as he would acquire goods – by buying the one, and bartering liquor for the other. However, they hardly behave as goods. In this, Schreiner’s account is clearly differentiated from the simple colonial horror story of an Englishman “going native” by setting up home with a black woman.⁸ First, these women are examples of the hardworking, intelligent “virile” womanhood which Schreiner so admired in Africa – Peter brags that “It’s better fun...having these black women than whites. The whites you’ve got to support, but the niggers support you” (42). Second, although Peter states that black women are eminently disposable – “when you’ve done with them you can just get rid of them”(42), his boast is, in fact, ironically reversed when the women desert him, the older woman stealing his ammunition to supply her real Mashona husband:

She took every ounce of ball and cartridge she could find in that hut, and my old Martini-Henry, and even the lid off the tea-box to melt into bullets for the old muzzle-loaders they have; and off she went, and took the young one too...they didn’t touch another thing: they left the shawls and dresses I gave them kicking about the huts, and went off naked with only their blankets and the ammunition on their heads (46).

Thus Peter Halket’s “nigger gals” decisively reject the accoutrements of parasitic English femininity that he had attempted to impose upon them. He imagines them further emasculating him by aborting his child, and depriving him of fatherhood. While Schreiner manipulates the powerful polemical resources of sentiment and an English domestic femininity, she was also able to depict a militantly anti-imperial black femininity which was tied to neither.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the importance of heroic and bourgeois definitions of British masculinity in constructing a framework of expectations about the British colonisation of Southern Rhodesia. The importance of the contradictory expressions of British

masculinity explored in this chapter lies primarily in their influence on the settler nationalism that gradually developed in Rhodesia during the period in which Stockley and Page were writing. This chapter has established that, while the lines of fracture between heroic and bourgeois definitions of masculinity did not correspond in any simple way to the growing split between colonial Rhodesian and imperial British masculinities, the heroic/bourgeois divide was nonetheless crucial in the historical negotiation of this and other differences. The different national identities imagined by Stockley and Page foreground contrasting notions of masculinity. The central role of gendered discourses in the writing of these identities provides the focus for the remaining chapters of this dissertation. Both writers, however, testify to the power of the both the heroic and bourgeois romance in establishing the polarities which governed the representations of white masculinity, and which laid down the discursive limits by which white masculinity could be imagined at the time. These polarities certainly also govern Schreiner's overtly politicised representation. Nonetheless, she (unlike Stockley and Page) is, characteristically, motivated to extend the play in the discourse beyond its conventional limits.

¹ Michel Foucault's version of the history of sexuality notes the peculiar place occupied by the body and by sexuality in this "biologising" racism. Focused on the control, observation and categorisation of sexuality, it constituted a new category of power which Foucault terms "biopower";

it was then that a whole politics of settlement (peuplement), family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health and everyday life, received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race (149).

² According to Janice Radway's research into popular twentieth-century women's fiction (specifically the "Harlequin" trademark romances), women readers consider a romance "ideal" if its hero is "constructed androgynously" (13). Radway points out that, although women readers require a hero of "spectacularly masculine phallic power," they place equal emphasis upon his "capacity for tenderness

and attentive concern" (13). Tania Modleski also notes that, in these romances, heroes are converted to tenderness in the process of being converted to domesticity "in novel after novel, the man is brought to acknowledge the preeminence of love and the attractions of domesticity at which he has, as a rule, previously scoffed" (17). Radway and Modleski see, writ large in the popular romance, something evident in the entire tradition of domestic and sentimental fiction. As Modleski points out: "Harlequins can be traced back through the work of Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen to the sentimental novel and ultimately ... to the novels of Samuel Richardson" (15).

³ As Sharpe points out, "profit making was inseparable from a post-Enlightenment vision of progress" (7).

⁴ I use this term in a broadly Lacanian sense, in which the symbolic Name of the Father is that which restricts access to what is desired, and which regulates kinship (a broader manifestation of the bourgeois homesteading principle).

⁵ Baden-Powell's account, though non-fictional "perfectly embodies the motifs of the adventure romance" and promoted the image of "a peculiarly devil-may-care British gallantry" (Chennells 115). Chennells shows that settler myths about the rising perpetuated the images initially provided by Selous and Baden-Powell: "The Whites brave and boyish in their enthusiasm for a scrap, the Blacks bloodthirsty and superstitious" (116).

⁶ Page's reference here is to Kipling's poem "The Lost Legion" (Rudyard Kipling's Verse 195).

⁸ Schreiner's depiction of black women in Trooper Peter Halket suggests that Ian Glenn's contention that white women's stories of miscegenation were restricted to depicting black women as either "heroic in their fatal suffering" or as "irresponsible and sexually charged figures" may be somewhat over-schematic (13).

Chapter Four

Constructing Settler Nationalism

Imperial Britain was a “culture that effectively encoded nationalism as masculine” – as Robert Dixon notes (64). The Australian adventure stories studied by Dixon construct a new, specifically Australian nationalism, which is also encoded as masculine – Dixon finds that the stories establish a new national identity using images of Australian brotherhood in “mateship” (70). As pointed out in the preceding chapter, heroic and bourgeois concepts of masculinity played a crucial role in defining and differentiating imperial British from colonial Rhodesian identities. However, representations of masculinity are not the only gendered tropes which govern our understanding of national identity. Powerful domestic tropes of empire and nation as woman played an important role in identifying British women with the patriotic discourses of their time. The following three chapters trace the development of settler nationalism in Gertrude Page’s and Cynthia Stockley’s romances, showing the importance of gendered discourses in the narrated imagining of a white Rhodesian community.

Feminist writers have noted the crucial role of gender in nationalist discourse. First, nationalism delineates the patriotic role of the feminine subject differently to that of the masculine subject. Second, potent, gendered images of motherhood, the family, and of sexuality are often the constitutive metaphors through which nationalist discourse is propagated.

This chapter provides a theoretical and historical framework for the detailed discussions of Stockley’s and Page’s settler nationalism which follow in subsequent chapters. It outlines the major ideologies of settler nationalism in Southern Rhodesia in

the period during which the romances were written, and places them in the context of theories of nationalism.

After exploring the historical and theoretical aspects of Rhodesian settler nationalism, this chapter investigates, first, the specific representations of the patriotic feminine subject in Rhodesia, and, second, the gendered images by which Rhodesia's identity as colony and nation was conceptualised.

Theories of Empire and Nation

Far from being a fixed quantity, the meaning of nationhood (like the meaning of masculinity and femininity) is constructed relationally, through a chain of differences: "national identity is determined not on the basis of its own intrinsic properties but as a function of what it (presumably) is not". As a result, "nations are forever haunted by their various definitional others" (Parker *et al.* 5). Theories of colonial discourse often tend to focus almost exclusively on the role of the racial "other" in constituting imperial identity. The "Orientalism" model initiated by Edward Said focuses on the production of knowledge about this "other", while Abdul JanMohamed sees "the essential colonial relationship" being that between "the dominators and the dominated" (1-2). While this relationship is obviously of crucial importance, the complexities of the Southern African situation introduce a variety and a historical progression of what Gayatri Spivak calls "self-consolidating others" to the discourses of empire and nation. This is evident in the novels of Stockley and Page.

After the turn of the century, South African and Rhodesian novelists attempting to write patriotically faced a rather confusing range of identifications. Most obviously, perhaps; they were compelled to confront what Anderson has famously termed "the fundamental contradiction of English official nationalism, i.e. the inner incompatibility of empire and nation". As Thomas Richards points out, "An empire is partly a fiction"(1)

since an empire is built on the fiction of the extension of national identity from metropole to colony. As a result, “throughout the nineteenth century the British liked to talk about their empire as if it were a sort of extended nation”(3). The difficulty attendant upon creating such an imperialist nationalism is graphically illustrated in a phrase of Anderson’s, which suggests that, to sustain belief in an empire, one needs to “[stretch] the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire” (82). The most obvious complication entailed by this “extension” of national identity to empire is the presence of various “races” (which were believed to be unequal) within one imperial, and thus, national, identity.

Other complications existed. While “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 16), empire contains the fundamental distinction between colony and metropole. This basic inequality was further gradated within the British empire, which consisted of dominions and three types of colonies:

The British divided their colonies into three classes – crown colonies, colonies with ‘representative’ governments, and those with ‘responsible’ governments – designating increasingly indirect forms of crown rule. Colonies with ‘responsible’ governments were eligible for elevation to ‘dominion’ status. (Spurr 5)

Ironically, the higher the status accorded to residents of the territory, the more indirect the rule. As colonies approached the status of dominions, and thus most narrowly approximated the equality required for “deep horizontal comradeship”, so their own nascent national identities strengthened, and they became further removed from the metropolitan identity.

These “incompatibilities” between colony and metropole, and between other competing nationalisms (Afrikaner nationalism, and later, African nationalism) were certainly manifest in both Rhodesia and South Africa, where different nationalisms were developing; distinct in many ways from the countries’ official identities as

members of the British empire. In South Africa, British imperial patriotism vied with another, competing colonial nationalism – that of the Boer republics. For white South Africans after the Anglo-Boer war and Union, any “unified” nationalism had to confront the intense enmity between Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism. In Rhodesia, the “contradiction” between empire and nation was exacerbated by the fact that the colony was originally administered by a commercial company, the British South Africa Company, which represented the interests of British capital in the region. The nature of Rhodesia’s relationship to the British South Africa Company and to the Imperial metropolis was fiercely debated in the “Responsible Government” debates, while the question of “Union”, or unification with South Africa, also loomed large.

In retrospect, however, it is obvious that the greatest contradiction within these settler nationalisms was also one of the least visible in public debates – the racial definitions of “nation” were not commonly challenged. One of the most powerful effects of colonial discourse is that, in many settler societies, the “native” was almost unquestioningly excluded from the “nation”. Thus the etymological root of “nation” in “birth” was ignored, the rights of birth being erased and superseded by the “birthright” accorded the colonizing races by imperialism. For only a very few writers, such as Olive Schreiner, W.C. Scully and Sol Plaatje, did the question of black membership of the nation even arise at this time.

Besides a “fundamental contradiction”, a “fundamental circularity” also characterises the relationship between colony and metropole. Richards has pointed out the peculiar tensions involved in extending national identity into empire. However, the dialectical nature of this ‘extension’ becomes apparent from Spivak’s formulation: “imperialism, understood as England’s social mission, was a crucial part

of the cultural representation of England to the English" (243). Within this dialectic, British imperial identity played a crucial role in constituting British national identity and vice versa. A further understanding of the intertwined origins and endings of nation and empire can be gained from Timothy Brennan's observation that European nationalism was historically motivated by European colonial expansion, where the "national idea ... flourished in the soil of foreign conquest" (59).

While European imperial models of thought are often explained by a binary and unequal relationship between the Western "Self" and its racial "Other", the colonial national identities invented by Page and Stockley demonstrate a far greater historical complexity than is implied in the binary schema. While self-consolidating "others" are certainly present in their fiction, and are characterised by the fixity which Bhabha attributes to the stereotype in Colonial Discourse, these figures can at any historical moment be both multiple and shifting, and are enunciated in the context of the authors' relation to historical events. Stockley and Page gravitate towards different definitional "others", and this marks a difference in allegiance between the authors with regard to the heroic and bourgeois romance. Page's favourite definitional "other" is the degenerate Rhodesian pioneer, against whom she defines her new Rhodesian nation. In contrast, Stockley's definitional other is the domestic woman, who threatens the heroic anti-bourgeois Rhodesia which Stockley depicts. (The two guises of Stockley's hated domestic women are the vindictive, frustrated and constricted settler's wife, and her villainesses, who are *femmes fatales*, demons in the home.) The most extreme form of "otherness" in these novels, that of the indigenous African, is in fact generally peripheral to the plots of the novels, only coming to the fore in the generally crudely racist representations of comical, animal-like domestic workers, and of the armed conflicts of the 1890s.

The role of the pioneer and the Boer in defining a bourgeois Rhodesian identity can be understood in the light of Ann Stoler's Foucauldian analysis of imperial nationalism. Stoler suggests that, at a fundamental level, the tensions which accompanied the extension of national identity into empire were repetitions and foreshadowings of very similar tensions which arose in the construction of a specifically bourgeois nationalism. The "internal" others of the imperial nation, and its "external" others, Stoler shows, were defined using a common racial and sexual vocabulary, and were both instrumental in the invention of a bourgeois imperial identity. Stoler also demonstrates (by extending and reworking Michel Foucault's analysis in The History of Sexuality to embrace the colonial context) that discourses of race and sexuality helped bourgeois Europeans to imagine "the moral parameters of European nations" and to identify "marginal members of the body politic" in both the colonies and the metropolis (7). As a result, "notions of what it meant to be bourgeois" were defined in Europe's imperial states "through a language of difference that drew on images of racial purity and sexual virtue" and centred upon the image of the healthy bourgeois body (10). As Stoler points out:

the distinctions defining bourgeois sexuality were played out against not only the bodies of an immoral European working class and native Other, but against those of destitute whites in the colonies and in dubious contrast to an ambiguous population of mixed-blood origin (100).

Settler Ideologies of National Identity

Chennells and Phimister point out that, for a long time, white Rhodesian identity could not really be conceptualised as a distinct nationalism. Nonetheless, both show that from the early 1900s, settler discontent reflects a nascent "awareness of a new and distinct Rhodesian identity" (Chennells iv). However, for at least three decades, this identity was expressed in terms of the discourse of British imperialism: "'Rhodesia for the Rhodesians', proclaimed Coghlan at the conclusion of the campaign for

Responsible Government, 'and Rhodesia for the Empire.'" (Phimister 181). Only during the great depression of the 1930s did the equation between Rhodesian and imperial loyalties begin to be perceived as somewhat shaky.

From the 1890s, however, as Phimister points out, the growing sense of a distinct Rhodesian identity was constituted almost entirely in opposition to other identities: "members of the settler bourgeoisie were clearer about what they were not than what they were" (180). At first, Rhodesian identity was defined as emphatically different to two negative images – the Rhodesian bourgeoisie insisted that they were not disreputable transients or "passing adventurers" and neither were they the powerless and disenfranchised "slaves of the Chartered Company". By 1914, however, South Africa (imagined in terms of both the Randlord capitalist and the poor-white Afrikaner) had become the most powerful "definitional other" for Rhodesians (Phimister 180-181). A more basic and unchanging negative, states Chennells, was a fundamental denial of affinity with Africa: "whatever else they were not, they were not Africans – or more precisely they were not black Africans" (222).

In contrast to this series of negatives, one of the only positives by which Rhodesians identified themselves consistently (before the 1930s, that is) was their membership of the British empire. This can be understood both in terms of the notion of Britain as regenerated and augmented by the colonies, but also in terms of the general colonial fear that "once an original Englishness is lost, there is no other authentic identity to replace it" (Dixon 70).

Ethel Tawse Jollie's resolutely anti-romantic history of Rhodesia, The Real Rhodesia, provides an excellent illustration of the circularities and contradictions which characterised this British/Rhodesian identity. Jollie, a politician and member of parliament, was the first woman to be elected to a Legislative Council in the then

British empire (Berlyn "On Ethel Colquhoun Tawse Jollie" 70). For Jollie, the essence of Britishness lies in the colonizing impulse: "the [British] race will never be more true to type and more worthy of their race than when they are making fresh Britains across the seas" (241). The implications of this logic (that true Britishness is to be found in the colonies) makes possible Jollie's erasure of any potential contradiction between Rhodesian nationalism and British Imperialism. For Jollie, Rhodesian patriotism is explained as a form of "super-British Imperialism", an imperial patriotism superior to that found in the metropolis:

a loyalty to Flag and Empire which appears to be old-fashioned in Great Britain today, combined with the conviction that Rhodesia is the finest spot in the Empire or under the Flag – in short a local patriotism so strong and so disinterested as to merit the title of National (102).

Jollie's ideal of patriotism is founded upon a sense of "deep horizontal comradeship", or national identity in the British empire. However, she perceives, and strongly resents, the absence of this true sense of undifferentiated nationalism in British appeals to colonial "loyalty". Jollie claims that the British distinction between the "Old Country" and the colonies irritates the "colonial brethren",

as if the Old Country were something outside and beyond us, in which we are graciously allowed to retain a benevolent interest! (241-242)

In contrast to South African desires for future autonomy from the British Empire, says Jollie,

No Rhodesian thinks of his country as anything but an integral part of the British Empire, and by the British Empire he stands or falls. If he has any complaint about the British Empire it is that his connection with it has been too shadowy, and that it has hitherto taken very little interest in Rhodesia (92).

Jollie set up her definition of Rhodesian identity as a realistic (read bourgeois) antidote to the excessively romantic images of prospectors and pioneers popularised by novelists. She explicitly warns readers that "the romantic novels of two talented ladies" (clearly referring to Stockley and Page) had misled many visitors and immigrants who,

on arrival, had expected to find the Rhodesia of the romances. Naturally, it assists Jollie's historicist claim to be presenting the "real Rhodesia" if she can define the truth of her work in opposition to the romances of such "ladies". Jollie's definition of the "real" Rhodesia emphasises that the newly established domestic bourgeoisie are the bearers of national identity, rather than the prospectors and pioneers of the earlier decades. She discards the romantic image of archetypal Rhodesians as "ragged pioneers and smart prospectors", and replaces this image by prototypical bourgeois "sober family men" (33). In this sense, Jollie rejects the kinds of images propagated by Stockley (the anti-domestic Rhodesia of prospectors, pioneers, mining and mobility) and accepts Page's more conventionally bourgeois Rhodesia. Page's later work, while certainly "romanticised", is devoted to the bourgeois values of prosperity, hard work and the establishment of the homestead on the farm in the wilderness, presided over by the domestic woman – values which Jollie also espouses.

"White Women" in the Rhodesian Colonial Project

The period during which Stockley's and Page's novels were published overlaps largely with a bourgeois period, which Phimister terms the period in Rhodesian history of "reconstruction and the rise of domestic capital". All these novels were published after Rhodesia's heroic decade of "speculation and violence" – the 1890s. However, the different characters of the two periods (explored in chapter 3) is particularly useful in explaining certain differences between Stockley and Page in terms of their relation to the heroic and bourgeois romance. The 1890s made an indelible impression on Stockley, branding her novels with the marks of the heroic romance, while this decade provides the images against which Page defines her more bourgeois Rhodesia.

Broadly speaking, one can identify three different historical meanings for British femininity in Rhodesia – first, in the period of occupation, second, in the period of conquest and thirdly, in the period of settlement. The initially absent and later violently objectified position of the British woman in the first two periods can be related to the ascendancy of heroic discourses during this time, when the bourgeois woman is virtually annihilated. However, the ascendancy of the bourgeois woman becomes apparent in the discourses of the third period. These discourses both accompanied and facilitated the process of white settlement of Rhodesia. The shifting signification of “woman” among the Rhodesian settlers during the first 30 years of the history of Rhodesia highlights the historically contingent nature of how women’s “role” is discursively defined. This process of definition and re-definition was governed by broader notions of women’s patriotism borrowed from the range of patriotic discourses of British nationalism and imperialism, as sketched below.

Women, National Identity and Patriotism

For a long time, the national identity of a British woman was deemed so negligible that, by law, upon marriage to a man who was not British, she was considered an 'alien' in her land of birth (Klug 22). In contrast, a British man's national identity was automatically transferred to his wife upon marriage. This flexibility of women’s national identities is explained in the following way by Jane Mackay and Pat Thane:

the Englishwoman remains a more shadowy figure than the Englishman, because women were believed to possess trans-national qualities. Nationality, we suggest, played a more significant role in the redefinition of masculinity as it emerged in the later nineteenth century than in that of femininity; one of the distinctions between male and female was that the concept of nationality was almost always on the male side of the divide. Women, indeed, had no fixed nationality...they were identified not with nation but with race. (qtd. in Giles 147)

As a result of the discrepancy between masculine and feminine patriotic identities, mainstream British imperial discourse often reduces British women's

patriotism to three rudimentary racial gestures – the first of these gestures is motherhood, whereby the white woman reproduces and expands the race, the second is heroic self-sacrifice, by which the white woman dies in order to preserve the honour of the race, and in the third, the raped body of the white women is foregrounded in order to construct national unity or imperial identity. In the more ‘peaceful’ moments of colonialism, the white woman fulfils her patriotic destiny by bearing children to swell the ranks of the colonisers – the first patriotic gesture. In the more violent moments of colonisation, heroic self-sacrifice takes over, and the dominant wartime tableau is that of the British woman shooting herself as a defence against the sexual threat of the black male. At other moments, the raped figure of the white woman smoothens over the anxiety created where either the moral superiority of, or unity between, the colonisers is in jeopardy. In each case her contribution takes place on the corporeal level, in her feminine body, in its capacity as supreme racial signifier. Hers is a patriotism which, according to these conventions, resides not so much in her thoughts, words or actions, but rather in the extent to which her body is at the disposal of her race. Nonetheless, within this context, the natalist discourse of settlement (which can be brought to highlight the domestic predominance of the bourgeois woman) provides possibly the greatest opportunities for developed explorations of white feminine subjectivity.

Despite the masculinist bias of the discourses of nationalism, it can hardly be claimed that white women were not agents of nationalism and imperialism during the colonial period. White women developed a range of discourses to express their involvement and agency in the settlement of colonies and the development of new nations. In the U.S.A., as Annette Kolodny has pointed out, the discourse of the garden prevailed. Perhaps because of the relationship between white women and labour in South

Africa, the local equivalents of American women pioneers and agriculturalists such as Alexandra in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* (who 'tames' the 'wild soil' of the family farm and makes it blossom into prosperity through a combination of her intelligence and her love for the land) are not a dominant feature of South African literary history. While the image of the garden is often used to express white women's relation to the South African landscape, the white woman as gardener or farmer is more rarely found, and is certainly not present in the majority of Page's and Stockley's romances. The novels locate themselves primarily in relation to the masculinist discourses of feminine patriotism described above, and display a curious commerce between an assertion of women's patriotic subjectivity and an acceptance of the passive status accorded them by the discourse.

In this chapter, I attempt to explore in more detail the discursive context of white women's patriotism. Firstly, I investigate the masculinist definitions of white women's patriotism in the colonial context – maternity, rape or self-sacrifice. Second, by means of a brief historical sketch, I illustrate white women's roles in the colonial conquest and settlement of Rhodesia. This should give a rough outline of the interlinked "vocabulary" of meanings for nationhood, empire and femininity through which Stockley and Page claimed their own peculiar brand of subjectivity. In the following chapter, I go on to show how, within this context, Stockley and Page succeeded in creating an audience for what turned out to be extremely popular and prolific documents of women's colonial nationalism.

Figures of Feminine Patriotism

Barred from the noble work of the civilizing project, the English woman enters a colonial iconography of martyrdom only in the capacity of victim. Unlike her male counterpart, it is her brutalized corpse rather than her body of good deeds that is of significance to the moral mission of colonialism (Sharpe 55).

Jenny Sharpe delineates an extremely narrow space for the display of British women's patriotism. She points out that the British woman's death is her prime gesture of patriotism, but this gesture does not become heroism because the woman remains the passive victim of savage brutality. The scene of British women committing suicide rather than submitting to savage sexual desires is reasonably common in colonial discourse. For example, one of the dramatic highlights of the show "Savage South Africa", (part of a "Greater Britain Exhibition" which took place in London, in 1899) consisted of the staging of "an attack on a white homestead, which ends with a woman hurling herself over a cliff, rather than be taken alive" (Trotter 13). The "Savage South Africa" scene is probably a repetition of an earlier colonial myth of feminine heroism which originated in the Indian sepoy revolt of 1857, and which is recounted by Sharpe. The story glorifies a "Miss Wheeler", captured at Cawnpore, "who slew several sepoys with a sword before drowning herself". The popularity of this story, which was "reenacted in playhouses and lecture halls across England" (Sharpe 71), possibly accounts for its transposition forty years after the Indian revolt, to the South African context.

Sharpe's statement about the passivity written into British discourses of feminine patriotism is certainly applicable to the colonial "discourse of rape" which she discerns in the Indian colonial context (67). In the realm of masculinist discourse, apart from the above-mentioned tableaux of heroic death, the British woman was often depicted as the brutalized victim of sexual violence. Here Sharpe makes a vital point, that the discourse of rape "helped manage the crisis in authority so crucial to colonial self-representation at the time" (67). The crisis, of course, was occasioned by the revolt, which undermined British assumptions of supremacy. The discourse of rape became important, she says, because the slippage between the "violation of the

English woman” and the “violation of colonialism” allowed “the social mission of colonialism” to acquire by association “the moral value of the domestic woman” (68); while it also allowed an “alibi” for the brutal punishments of Indians that were enacted after the rebellions – the alibi of British manhood incensed by the outrage to British womanhood (Sharpe 77). The defensive turn in discourses of British colonialism after the revolt replaced earlier notions of the confident pursuit of wealth and national hegemony with a self-sacrificing “civilising mission”, governed by “benevolence, moral fortitude, and rationality” (6). In the terms of our discussion, Sharpe is outlining a shift from an aggressively heroic model of colonialism to a defensively bourgeois model. The implication of bourgeois ideology in the latter model facilitates Page’s brand of Rhodesian patriotism, by domesticating the heroic realm. This would also help us to explain why much of the metropolitan outrage about Rhodesia’s 1890s occurred within the framework of a general belief in the imperial mission.

A slightly different “discourse of rape” existed in South Africa and Rhodesia around the turn of the century. Known locally as the “black peril” scares, these were a wave of accusations, mostly unfounded, by white women, who claimed that they had been raped by black men. Elizabeth Schmidt and Gareth Cornwell (following Charles van Onselen) attribute these “attacks of public hysteria” to “periods of stress or acute tension” in the settler community:

In the case of Southern Rhodesia, major “black peril” scares took place in 1902, 1905-1906, 1908, 1910-1911, 1924, 1929, and 1932. The outbreaks of 1902 and 1932 occurred during periods of severe economic depression, when wages fell and Africans and Europeans competed for scarce jobs and agricultural markets. Those of 1908 and 1910-1911 coincided with a dramatic increase in European immigration. According to Dane Kennedy, such strains on the social fabric “set white settlers at odds among themselves”, opening the door to African insurrection. (Schmidt 170)

In this case, the common aim of “[r]allying to protect white womanhood” in the face of the black peril allowed the white community to reunify (Schmidt 170). However, it was not only the black/white opposition which was reinforced by these outbreaks of hysteria: “black peril” scares were also useful in developing a local national identity, as they served to symbolically unify the settler community against the British South Africa Company, which, in settler perceptions, was not doing enough to prevent or punish such attacks (Kennedy qtd. in Schmidt 170).

While discourses of rape and martyrdom were common in times of stress, motherhood was the most common patriotic option available for British women. Stockley’s and Page’s romances were influenced by the maternalist and natalist discourses that arose in Britain at around the turn of the century. According to Klug, these eugenicist discourses arose because

the relatively poor British military performance in the Boer Wars brought fears of “national inefficiency” and “unhealthy stock”.... To safeguard the health of the nation eugenicists gave women, or rather middle class women, a pivotal role. The elevation of motherhood was emphasized at the expense of women developing other skills (21)

As Gillian Whitlock points out, the settler colonies were the primary targets of natalist discourses:

in settlement colonies the fertility of European women and the welfare of mothers and children were vital to the colonising project. The British Women’s Emigration Association, for example, used marriage as one of its incentives to encourage women to emigrate. They also stressed this as an opportunity to civilise the world and secure British values in the colonies (359).

Similar points are made by Anna Davin (10), Sara Mills (59) and Cecilie Swaisland (42).

Given the general context of the discourses representing British women’s patriotism, I now present a historical outline of the changes, during the settlement of Rhodesia, of representations the British woman. These representations alter as

Rhodesian patriotic discourses shift from the early heroic period of speculation and violence to the later period of bourgeois settlement.

The Rhodesian context

At the inception of the colonial project in the territory, during the period of “occupation”, “the [British South Africa] Company [forbade] the entry of women” (Blake 95). This particular colonial project was initially conceptualised as an exclusively masculine penetration or “opening” (Darter 140) of virgin territory. As a result, an archetype of Rhodesian patriotic identity, “the pioneer”, was marked as thoroughly masculine. The masculinity of the category “pioneer” (as defined by “The Rhodesia Pioneers' and Early Settlers' Society”) was in fact only successfully challenged in 1934, thirty years after the society was founded, when female settlers were admitted as members (J.M. Lloyd).

However, despite the prohibition, a white woman, the legendary “Billy”, eighteen-year old mistress of “a mysterious character who called himself the Vicomte de la Panouse”, did join the pioneers in their heroic venture (Blake 95-6). Billy, who left England as a chambermaid called Fanny Pearson, succeeded in gaining access to the territory disguised as a boy – “dressed in jaunty knickerbockers” (R. Isaacson 16, Darter 138). This story may well have inspired Stockley’s novel *Ponjola*, with its cross-dressing heroine, Desmond. In this novel, Stockley also gains access to the heroically all-male world of the Rhodesian pioneer by putting her heroine in drag.

White women were first officially permitted to enter Matabeleland and Mashonaland in 1892, in an attempt to improve the bad reputation the country had gained during the previous summer:

Dr Jameson was opposed in principle to the introduction of women so early, but as the country had acquired a bad name, owing to the hardships endured by the first white men settlers, he thought it would create a good impression to

be able to point to the fact that English women were actually there (J.M. Boggie 65)

The presence of white women was thus a signifier of the success of the colony; and the efficacy of the symbol “woman settler” was entirely independent of the actual experiences of the women – women’s patriotism here requires only their mute presence.

During the period of conquest – the risings of the Ndebele and the Mashona against British rule – the silent and brutalized figure of the feminine colonist becomes useful to settler discourse. In a few exceptional cases, valorous feminine attitudes are reported, where women prefer death rather than submit to nameless horrors. For example, Robert Baden-Powell describes admiringly the “pluck” of a woman settler who, while fleeing to Salisbury laager, “merely asked to be supplied with a revolver, with which to shoot herself if the worst came to the worst” (45).

However, in Selous's well-known account of the risings, the widespread rape and plunder wreaked by Rhodesian troops during this period is justified in terms of compulsive references to the “brutal murders of European women and children” (xiv). As in the vengeful punishments enacted after the Indian Mutiny, the excesses perpetrated by white males are justified by the outrages committed against the “innocent” domesticity of “white women and children”. Selous claims to be motivated by intense emotions arising in response to native cruelty, claiming “had [the rebellion] not been accompanied by the cruel murders of white women and children, I should not have been animated by the same vengeful feelings as now possessed me” (65).

Justifying his actions to a British audience, he points out:

my story has been written in the midst of all the horrors of a native rebellion ... I have seen many gruesome sights, and have with my own hands collected together the broken skulls of murdered women and children – Dutch and English – in order to give them Christian burial (xix).

Selous, who clearly believed implicitly in the subjugation of the Ndebele and Mashona to British rule, finds the level of native treachery and duplicity sufficient reason to redefine the Ndebele and Mashona as inhuman:

not men and brothers, but monsters in human shape, that ought to be shot down mercilessly like wild dogs or hyenas, until they are reduced to a state of abject submission to the white man's rule (88).

Presiding over this "Eurosavagery" (Sharpe 6) is the figure of the innocent white woman – Selous dedicates his book to his wife "who during the last few months has at once been my greatest anxiety and my greatest comfort". Her domestic space, which, in bourgeois ideology, is the man's refuge from a hostile world, has, paradoxically, become his Achilles heel.

As an excuse for European brutality, and as a means of gaining the moral high ground, this is a very similar rhetorical strategy to the "discourse of rape" analysed by Sharpe (in the Anglo-Indian context).¹ When Selous suggests the levels of cruelty with which the risings were put down, his rhetoric images an exact British justice in retribution, an equality between the violence perpetrated by the Ndebele and the Mashona, and the violence perpetrated by the British: "nor was any more mercy shown than had been lately granted by the Kafirs to the white women and children who had fallen into their power" (192).

Out of the public gaze, however, and when the women in question were not white, an extremely cynical awareness of the usefulness of appealing rhetorically to vengeance for "murdered women and children" is occasionally shown, as when Dr Jameson exults in his private correspondence: "we have the excuse for a row over murdered women and children now" (qtd. in Ranger 94).

Olive Schreiner in Trooper Peter Halkett of Mashonaland debunked the "women and children" justification for British brutality against the Ndebele and

Mashona. Pointing out that the Chartered Company administration of Rhodesia left the territory practically undefended in order to stage the Jameson Raid, one of the troopers exclaims, "I look upon every man and woman who was killed here as murdered by the Chartered Company"(204). Here Schreiner suggests that the safety of "women and children" was, in general, only of minor concern to the Chartered Company in their recklessly heroic pursuit of wealth and territory. (Naturally, in making this accusation, Schreiner's polemic relies on the chivalrous notion of "women and children" as vulnerable and as the objects of male protection.)

Apart from being useful to the Chartered Company's public relations exercises, substantial numbers of women settlers signalled a shift in the colony from a "merchant and speculative" economy, to an industrial and productive economy "located in mining and agriculture" – a more stereotypically "settled" settler economy (Phimister 2). The long-awaited gold-mining "boom" of this "Second Rand" never materialized. The capitalist economy which gradually developed in this society depended on settlement, and settler domesticity was both prerequisite for and product of these economic changes and development (Phimister 100).

In a settler economy, discourses encouraging motherhood, or natalist discourses, become the dominant representation of women, and a woman's patriotic duty lies in enhancing the productivity of the colony in her domestic role as wife and mother. Phimister points out that between 1911 and 1921, the percentage of women in the Rhodesian settler population increased from 34 per cent to 44 per cent. This increase was associated with "higher marriage and birth rates than those pertaining among South African whites or in Britain", despite the higher proportions of women in those countries. The natalist discourses may well have contributed to this "boom".

Cecil John Rhodes is claimed to have repeatedly insisted that “Homes, more homes” were what was needed to ensure Rhodesia’s success (qtd. in Boggie 80), while Baden-Powell enthusiastically expressed the need for white women in Matabeleland, viewing them first as domestic labour, to be “imported”, second as bearers of children, and generally, as a catalyst to make the idle “wasters” of the colony more efficient and productive:

This would make a grand country for colonising. Judging from the few families we have seen, the locally-born children are as healthy and well-grown as you wish. The great want in the town is that of cooks and domestic servants. With a good supply of these would follow much marrying and settling down on the part of many of the young prospectors, police, and farmers, who at present pour all their earnings into the hands of canteen-keepers. It is a pity that some system of importing a good class of woman domestic servants is not tried, similar to that employed in Canada (480).

Baden-Powell's conception of women's salutary effect (when “married” and “settled”) on the health of a colony is a commonplace of Imperialism. These extracts from the private letters of David Livingstone, the Victorian missionary, give an indication of the degeneration which was seen to accompany colonial settlements (such as that of the Portuguese in Mocambique), where settlement and marriage was not encouraged:

Nothing can be done with the Portuguese – they are an utterly effete, worn out, used up, syphilitic race: their establishments are not colonies, but very small penal settlements....No women are sent out, and the moral atmosphere is worse than that of the valley of Sodom...a more effete, syphilitic brood does not exist. (64-5)

Moments of stress in the settler economy of the region allowed a version of the “discourse of rape” to resurface, in the form of the “black peril” paranoias which beset the territory at various times. The levels reached by this paranoia are indicated by the fact that, in 1903, it was legislated that the death penalty could be imposed “at judicial discretion” for attempted rape (Blake 159). In practice, this penalty was only applied where a black man was convicted of trying to rape a white woman. This blatant injustice and discrimination were rationalised in the following way:

a white woman who admitted to having been actually raped by a black man would find social life in the white community impossible thereafter, but she could give evidence of an unsuccessful attempt without this stigma, and therefore the attempt ought to merit the death sentence too (Blake 159).

This explanation seems to indicate that, however useful a raped white woman might be to nationalist discourse, the actual social consequence for a white woman of being raped by a black man was complete dishonour and ostracism. This is one possible explanation for the almost complete absence of “black peril” references in the novels of Stockley and Page. Their representations of black men generally refuse to admit the possibility that they could dishonour white womanhood in any way.

The Nation as Woman and the Imperial Family Romance

Studies of empire and nationalism often note that, for writers across the political spectrum, the image of the family and the image of the woman prove extremely useful in smoothing over or highlighting the contradictions, ambiguities and circularities of national and imperial identification. It has been noted by feminists that

[v]ery often [women] constitute [the] actual symbolic figuration of [ethnic and national groups]. The nation as a loved woman in danger or as a mother who has lost her sons in battle is a frequent part of the particular nationalist discourse in national liberation struggles or other forms of national conflicts (Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis 1989:8)

In many cases, this image of the nation-as-woman “depends for its representational efficacy on a particular image of woman as chaste, dutiful, daughterly or maternal” (Parker *et al.* 6). The extension of this image of the nation as woman often personifies the imperial metropolis as “mother nation” to her “colonial daughters”, in an “imperial family”. As Chris Prentice points out, “It has become a commonplace of descriptions of Imperial-colonial relations to invoke familial and bodily metaphors, while more recently their function in ‘naturalizing’ such relations has been exposed” (45). For example, Sir Charles Coghlan naturalises the violent acquisition of Rhodesia for empire (in a settler’s guide to Rhodesia) by referring to Rhodesia as “the latest

daughter of the Empire" (2). Rudyard Kipling, in his poem "Our Lady of the Snows", uses the same familial metaphor to naturalise the contradiction between dependence and independence, identity and separation in Canada's relations with the imperial metropolis: "Daughter am I in my mother's house / But mistress in my own" (Rudyard Kipling's Verse 182).

Another, generally unanalysed aspect of such representations is their rootedness in the domestic ideology of bourgeois, rather than heroic colonialism. The imperial mother and her colonial daughter-state both assume the powers and responsibilities of the bourgeois domestic woman – they are expected to be civilised, nurturing, selfless, discreetly powerful, and continent.

Rhodesian Discourses of the Nation as Woman

In the discourse about Rhodesia, familial metaphors are not only used to naturalise colonial relations, but are also often consciously and rhetorically used to poke fun, to express discontent, and to expose the contradictions within the less than ideal imperial relationships in the territory. For Parker, et al., the conventional personified image of the nation as woman is only effective if the woman is characterised as "chaste, dutiful, daughterly or maternal". However, the images of the nation as virgin or as mother has variants which are not mentioned by these critics. In these, quite different, versions, the nation is personified as a neglectful and cruel mother, or as a sexualised temptress. The cruel mother and the temptress often preside over the colonial enterprise as a personifications of Africa, Rhodesia, or South Africa, and, very occasionally, of Empire itself. While this image is sometimes used to imply that the imperial or national entity is not worth serving, in "her" deviance from the qualities required by the bourgeois ideal, it is also used to heighten the sense of the "white man's burden" – the masochistic pleasure derived from contemplation of patriotic self-sacrifice and martyrdom.

For Jollie, the metaphor of a neglectful mother allows an unusual formulation of discontent at the neglect she perceives Rhodesia to have suffered at the hands of empire: "Rhodesia is like Topsy", claims Jollie, "she has Growed Somehow, but no thanks to her Imperial Mother" (220). In the Rhodesian context, such metaphors are often to be found in references to the South African government and to the Chartered Company, both of which were perceived by many Rhodesians to be inadequate guardians of the bourgeois imperial ideal in Africa. Adrian Darter, writing in Rhodesia in 1914, personifies the Chartered Company as "Mother 50 per cent", a name which derides, from a settler point of view, the fiscal policies of the Company (whereby it claimed 50% ownership of all minerals extracted in the colony). The Company is mocked as a neglectful mother, a quarrelsome woman and a mere temporary tenant of Rhodesia:

'Mother 50 per cent has given us too much brimstone and too little treacle, and we have grown to despise treacle She has jumped over the fence and quarrelled with all her neighbours, but she has kept her house in order, and now that her lease has expired the British Government will collect its ground rent, get its title deeds in order; compensate the old lady for work done and give her an old age pension (195).

A similar mockery of the ideal maternal qualities attributed to the nation is to be found in Jollie's rejection of the suggestion that Rhodesia join the Union of South Africa. Jollie refers sarcastically to the "happy family in South Africa" (64), alluding to the dissension and competing nationalisms within the "Union". She then quotes Chartered Company spokesman Leander Starr Jameson, who originally objected to Union, since, in his view, were Rhodesia to join the Union, its British identity would be unceremoniously squashed:

"What is going to happen to this young, vigorous Rhodesian child when it gets into the bed of that large and corpulent mother, the Union? ... your aspirations are going to be killed and at the inquest next morning the verdict will be 'overlaid by the Union'!" (64)

The rhetorical efficacy of this image relies not only on the idea of the neglectful mother, but also upon Jameson's construction of a physically repulsive image of femininity.

Tawse Jollie herself finds the suffocating and slightly incestuous connotations of the image useful tools in her mockery of the Chartered Company's change of policy:

Nine years later, in 1922, we find the whole force and energy of the Chartered Company on the side of putting Rhodesia to bed with that large and corpulent mother – the Union of South Africa! (65)

Metropolitan images of the nation as virgin have an explicitly sexualised realisation in the nationalist discourses of Southern Africa. This sexualised image draws upon a personification of the continent Africa, that Hammond and Jablow mention in their discussion of Western "myths of Africa". In this realisation, according to Hammond and Jablow, the continent is personified as "an irresistible woman" who embodies "the lure of Africa"; as a result, the feminine image is one of a beautiful woman "whose beauty is a snare and an enticement to destruction" (148).

This image was certainly a commonplace of imperialism, and was popularized in the work of writers such as Kipling and H. Rider Haggard. It also provided Stockley with one of her favourite images of Africa. As Chennells points out, the enthralling witch or enchantress is a convention borrowed from the heroic romance (246). Kipling's poem "South Africa" provides a good example of this trope (Rudyard Kipling's Verse 207). The poem allegorizes the irresistible appeal of Southern Africa for British colonizers in terms of the attractions of a beautiful and unfaithful woman for a persistent and long-suffering band of male suitors. South Africa is a "woman wonderful", characterised by none of the feminine virtues ("neither simple, kind, nor true"). Her exotic beauty draws "Christian gentlemen" to pursue her. This poem is used as an epigraph in Stockley's The Claw, where it gives rise to her central images of Rhodesia and Africa. Most notably, the image is an alternative to the bourgeois

model of the presiding imperial domestic woman, and proffers a heroic model of colonialism – whereby British men have license to “hotly” press their suit, in quest of the “Pagan” delights of South Africa.

Conclusion

The above discussion outlines the major tropes governing the Rhodesian national identities developed in Stockley’s and Page’s fiction, which are discussed in more detail in the following chapters. These identities, though different, both bear the marks of the various exclusions enacted in the Rhodesian project of constructing a bourgeois national/imperial patriotism. While Page is clearly aligned with the bourgeois tropes, and Stockley with the heroic, both writers reveal the fundamental instability, not only of definition of the new Rhodesian nation, but also of the imperial identity from which it was born.

¹ The figure of the dead white woman also appears in popular settler writing, such as this line of doggerel from *The Nugget* “the ghastly corse [sic]/ or grinning skull of some fair murdered woman” (qtd. in Ranger 131-132), or, more grotesquely influenced by the discourse of rape, in Melina Rorke’s autobiography: “Beyond, across a tangle of berry bushes sprawled the nude body of a white woman; she had been repeatedly stabbed with spears, and a knobkerry[sic] had been thrust up into her body” (216).

Chapter Five

Rhodesian Nationalism and the Early Settler Romance

Anthony Chennells points out that Cynthia Stockley and Gertrude Page both constructed Rhodesian national identity using ideas current in their day, which were later to solidify into distinct settler myths or discourses about the country. The two writers do, in the broader scheme of things, have a great deal in common. Certain differences exist, however, between Stockley and Page in terms of the national identities they construct, while a degree of historical variation also exists in the writing of each author.

The earliest novels of both writers are interesting in that they are significantly different to the later novels, in which, as Chennells notes, a version of specifically Rhodesian patriotism is more fully developed. Page's novels show more historical variation than do Stockley's – Page defines the Rhodesian identity in relation to a series of "definitional others", which vary according to the events of settler history after 1904. Her nationalist discourse is also fundamentally influenced by her experiences of the growth in settler agriculture after 1908.

Stockley, on the other hand, displays a certain fixity in her nostalgia for the first violent decade of settlement in the territory. Her retrospectively patriotic valuation of the importance of the military confrontations of the 1890s in the making of Rhodesian identity becomes marked later in her career: while residual in Virginia of the Rhodesians (1903), it reaches a peak in The Claw (1911). Nonetheless, her allegiance to anti-bourgeois values as the basis of national identity occasionally falters, particularly in relation to alcoholism and the work ethic. By 1930, in Tagati, her view of Rhodesia has soured, although even here the pioneer remains a symbol of Rhodesia's early promise. Viewed generally, Stockley never completely renounces

the heroic and romantic pioneering and prospecting image of the Rhodesia of the 1890s against which later nationalists such as Jollie and Page defined the new Rhodesian “reality”.

Women writers, romance and politics

As widely read popular romances, the novels of Page and Stockley were both products and agents of early imperial patriotism and Rhodesian nationalism, and their writing constituted the dominant force in the early settler novel in Rhodesia. One needs therefore to ask how their political concerns and the patriotic messages of their novels fit into the bourgeois romance, a superficially “apolitical” genre.

While Nancy Armstrong has established the covertly political function of the domestic novel, her insights are restricted to the intersection of class and gender politics in metropolitan England. Other feminists, such as Gayatri Spivak, Jenny Sharpe and Anne McClintock have suggested perspectives which clarify the imperialist role of the nineteenth-century domestic novel. Spivak and Sharpe both find the origins of Western feminist individualism in an “othering” of the colonial woman – most memorably in Charlotte Brontë’s polarity between the feminist individualist Jane Eyre, on the one hand, and the self-destructive and degenerate Bertha Mason on the other. Sharpe shows that this polarity is extended by means of the Indian women whom Jane imagines as objects of her missionary endeavours.

Sharpe also finds the origins of late nineteenth-century varieties of imperialism within the domestic ideologies as expressed by the bourgeois novel. For Sharpe “the moral value of the domestic woman – her self-sacrifice, duty and devotion” in fact provided an analogy for “the social mission of colonialism”(68), with the result that, during the nineteenth century, colonialist ideology shifted away from “self-interest and moral superiority” and towards “self-sacrifice and racial

superiority" (7). As pointed out in chapter 1, this "feminisation" of the political sphere in turn facilitated the move of middle-class women into the political arena, and allowed the inclusion of overtly political themes in the "new woman" novels of the 1890s. Additional connections between imperialism and domesticity are suggested by McClintock, who demonstrates that the export of Victorian domesticity (as ideal and as commodity) was an integral part of the imperial project:

Imperialism suffused the Victorian cult of domesticity and the historic separation of the private and the public, which took shape around colonialism and the idea of race. At the same time, colonialism took shape around the Victorian invention of domesticity and the idea of the home. (36)

Read in the context of these insights, the colonial version of the domestic or bourgeois romance can be seen as a genre which naturalised the imperial export of domesticity to the colonies. Its domestic focus allowed an elaboration and propagation of the colonial homesteading principle. By publicising the colony to a largely feminine metropolitan audience, it may also have facilitated the emigration of those colonists essential to the establishment of homesteads – British women – while providing their emigration with a specifically domestic-imperial rationale. The political concerns of the colonial bourgeoisie and of settler women found a home in the Rhodesian variant of this genre, modelled on the "new woman" fiction of the metropolis.

Earlier Southern African romance writers, such as Harriet Ward, wrote for an avid audience of "would-be emigrants" in Britain (De Reuck 44). Jollie's comments (mentioned in chapter 4) suggest that Stockley's and Page's novels fulfilled a similar propagandistic function to Ward's, in that they constructed a fictional identity for Rhodesia, highlighted its attractions, dangers, and difficulties from a female emigrant's perspective, and naturalised the politics of imperialism by presenting them within the safely apolitical framework of the bourgeois romance.

Publishers seem to have marketed these colonial romances (particularly those by Page) as truthful reportage. Publishers' advertisements in Page's novels contain extracts from contemporary reviews, which present quite extravagant claims for the truth of the stories: "with a few strokes [of her pen] she wafts us into Rhodesia"; "The note of the book is its astonishing truth"; "In this story of Rhodesian life the author has shown impartially both the sunshine and the shadows"; "A capital description of life on a farm in Rhodesia"; "there is a glow of real life in the telling which fascinates the reader" (Page The Great Splendour page facing title page). In contrast, as mentioned in the introduction, reviewers branded Stockley's most patriotic romance, The Claw, as too intensely emotional to describe an Anglo-Saxon colony accurately.

Despite the inclusion of political rhetoric in the "new woman" novel, political discourse was not considered entirely appropriate for female writers and readers, and consequently, its liberal inclusion by Page and Stockley in a "woman's genre" such as the romance calls for further investigation. British women's struggle for enfranchisement entailed both a defiance and a redefinition of the rules which governed the sexual division of labour and which excluded women from the public, political sphere. (As Armstrong points out, this division formed the basis of the "sexual contract".) "Women's space", when tentatively extended into the public sphere via the introduction of women's supplements and "ladies' columns" in the press, was expected to conform to this apolitical, domestic definition. Both Page and Stockley, in their journalistic endeavours, knocked their heads against this restriction. When Gertrude Page was asked to write an article for The Times "Woman's Supplement", and volunteered to write one on "the Rhodesian Elections", the editors asked her to "choose another subject as controversial matter was tabooed" (Dobbin, Gertrude – Letter to M. Leggate).

A similar event occurred in Stockley's life. As mentioned in the introduction, in 1897 Stockley worked for a Natal newspaper, where she claims to have been employed as a "political reporter" and had to attend parliament and write columns of "personal comments" about the politicians. Her account highlights the stigmatisation which accompanied such employment for a woman, and, characteristically, she attributes such attitudes to the narrowly conventional outlook of colonial women:

In those days, when I first began to write, journalism for women was all in the dark ages of shackled womanhood, and as a pioneer woman journalist, I was looked upon by the women of Natal with suspicion, and with disapproval (Boggie 87).

Searches of The Natal Witness and The Natal Mercury of 1897 for Stockley's journalism are considerably complicated by the fact that hardly any by-lines are given with articles, and if they are given, they are usually pen names. However, it does seem to have been mandatory to specify the sex of the writer in the unusual event of her being female. None of the female writers seem quite to match Stockley's description of her job (above). The closest candidate, who displays clear ideological and stylistic correspondences to Stockley, is a particularly controversial figure called "Madame Fashion" who wrote a weekly column for the Natal Witness.¹ Her column, entitled "Ladies' Letter", is always addressed to "Dear Edith", and mimics the "properly" feminine epistolary form. It was also intended to address uncontroversially feminine topics. However, "Madame Fashion" departed substantially from the feminine terrain to which both her readers and her editors expected her to confine herself. The "Ladies' Letter" was intended to be a fashion, gossip and social column of "bright chatty little sketches on things dear to the woman's heart" ("A Dutchwoman" 3). Nonetheless, "Madame Fashion" ventured into social satire and political commentary, which aroused the ire of her readers. As one letter to the editor expostulated, "she wandered aimlessly into politics, telling us that she was sick to death of dress etc."

("A Dutchwoman"). "Madame Fashion" commented freely on political topics such as the necessity for harmonious Anglo-Boer relations, the employment of Zulu labourers vs. indentured Indian labourers, ways of facilitating women's emigration to the colonies, and included several veiled references to the "purity" debates about legislating prostitution in South Africa (July 13; July 21; July 28). Her editors were apparently unhappy with the imperial fervour she wished to express in her columns, and she complains that the July 21 column was censored because "the sentiments therein expressed were too 'jingo' to please the authorities" (July 28).

Although her column appears to have been extremely popular, and elicited a "voluminous correspondence" from readers ("Madame Fashion" Aug 3), she aroused great anger from some readers when she debated the freedoms claimed by the "new woman". In one particularly contentious letter (July 28), she attacks a fellow journalist, calling him an "inimitable stupid" for even debating whether women should be "allowed to smoke". Her argument constructs an image of women who wait for no-one's permission to claim newly attainable freedoms: "[Woman] will smoke, drink, hunt, and ride astride, just when and how she pleases". She goes on to redefine the feminist mission as more than merely stooping "to ape man's vices", but as "taking more freedom to herself and developing her capacities of thought, action, and judgment by use" in physical activities, higher education and political involvement. Suggesting women's moral superiority to men, she claims that "[p]olitics are our business, almost more than men's" and calls for solidarity among women:

It is because we have not been united in our own camp, that we are still men's 'chattels', and have to see infamous laws passed to the oppression of the weak and helpless and the protection of the strong and wicked (July 28).

She does not explicitly identify these "laws", although she is probably referring to laws governing prostitution. She notes that women's silence on sexual

matters (“this subject”) is enforced because of their “fear of derision, shame, and timidity” and that this silence “is one of the bonds, perhaps the strongest bond, that keeps her a slave”. Her letter ends with a discussion of the various “weapons” or feminine wiles, which, she asserts, if carefully chosen, will invariably allow women to have their own way with men. Here she divides men into four categories, according to the feminine stratagem which is likely to work on them. These stratagems range from “kittenish” playfulness through rational argument and emotional appeals to constant nagging (July 28).

Despite Stockley’s memory of chivalrous Natal gentlemen, some of “Madame Fashion’s” most vicious criticism came from men outraged at her feminist views and her flouting of the sexual contract in its delineation of separate male and female spheres. One, who signs his letter “Anti-Billingsgate”, first berates “Madame Fashion” for her grammatical mistakes and then laments her departure from the ideal of domestic femininity:

What is a ladies letter? Until disillusioned by ‘Madame Fashion’ we had fondly imagined it to be a daintily-worded, grammatical and withal amusing and instructive discourse upon subjects which are generally supposed to be interesting to the educated feminine mind.

He dislikes “Madame Fashion’s” departures from the ideal of feminine propriety, but he finds her advice to women on the most effective ways of manipulating men particularly offensive and potentially dangerous:

It is a pity that misleading rubbish of this objectionable type should be allowed to pass unchallenged in a paper which is within the reach of every girl in the colony. Such a letter is calculated to do untold harm to impressionable girls who have not the educational advantages of their English sisters. In a colony where the savage population is so large, and the natives are so closely connected with domestic life, a woman who presumes to set up ideals for her younger sisters should at least be careful that those ideals are of the highest and best.

By flouting the rules of feminine propriety, implies “Anti-Billingsgate”, “Madame Fashion” is not only jeopardising the safety of vulnerable feminine colonists, but is also perhaps risking the stability of the colony as a whole. For “Anti-Billingsgate”, the “proper lady” entrenched class and race boundaries, while the “new woman” threatened the distinction, and thus the distance, between civilised and savage. Stockley’s novels explore the contradictions between, and attempt to suture the improper, “wild” sexual assertiveness of the new woman and the imperial ideal, or “proper lady”.

This debate gives an idea of the uneasiness created by the feminine subject entering the field of politics in print. The following section of this chapter surveys the major historical developments in the patriotic discourses of Page and Stockley, while chapter 6 considers the trade-offs and compromises Stockley and Page found necessary as woman writers in appropriating colonial nationalisms and expressing them within the bourgeois romance.

Gertrude Page: Reconstructing a Rhodesian Identity

Page’s Rhodesian novels were all written between the years 1907 and 1921, and they are influenced by the growing bourgeois emphasis in the period of Rhodesian history (1903-1922) which, states Phimister, was defined by “reconstruction and the rise of domestic capital” (45). Unlike Stockley, who spent a great deal of time in London and Paris during this period, Page was swept up in the economic and social currents in Southern Rhodesia at this time – owing to Dobbin’s farming and ranching activities. Although she and Dobbin only arrived in Rhodesia early in the 1900s, her earliest novels (Love in the Wilderness and The Edge O’ Beyond) give some sense of the disarray in Rhodesia after the “speculation and violence” of the 1890s (Phimister). They also display ambivalence about a Rhodesian national identity, a colonial work ethic, and women’s role in the

colonisation of Rhodesia. However, as settlers set about “reconstructing” the Rhodesian economy along productive capitalist lines, specifically in the sphere of agriculture, discourses of national identity, productivity and natalism begin to appear in Page’s work in a less ambivalent manner. After a brief consideration of how discourses of the Rhodesian landscape facilitated Page’s Rhodesian nationalism, I will discuss the evolution in her work of a Rhodesian national identity and a colonial work ethic. Her natalist position regarding colonial women will be discussed in the following chapter.

An Emptied Landscape

Page’s writing of Rhodesian nationalism is dependent upon an image of the Rhodesian landscape as a wide, empty, uninhabited space, available for colonisation by the new Rhodesian nation. This image relies upon a characteristic rhetorical strategy of colonial discourse, that of “the rhetorical strategy of negation by which Western writing conceives of the Other as absence, emptiness, nothingness, or death” (Spurr 92). David Spurr explains this strategy of negation according to the following two principles:

This exploration leads to the formulation of two principles: first, negation serves to reject the ambiguous object for which language and experience provide no adequate framework of interpretation; second ... negation acts as a kind of provisional erasure, clearing a space for the expansion of the colonial imagination and for the pursuit of desire. (92-93)

Correspondingly, Page’s empty Rhodesian landscape entails an erasure of the entire existence, culture, and history of the original inhabitants of the territory. Chennells points out the “extraordinary durability” of the image, in Rhodesian settler fiction, of Rhodesia as an empty land, a “huge unpeopled wilderness lying north of the Limpopo” (160). As Chennells shows, this allows the territory to be seen on the one hand in classic capitalist imperialist terms as a “new land” waiting for settlers “to stir it into life” and transform it into productivity – he terms this the “pastoral of order” (160). On the other hand, an emptied landscape is also a characteristic discursive strategy of what Chennells

terms the (more romantic) “pastoral of freedom”. Here Chennells finds that characters see the empty land as “an opportunity to free themselves from the petty and inhibiting conventions of older and more crowded worlds and discover their essential selves” (160). Both forms of pastoralism are certainly present in Page’s work from the start, and although her first novels valorize a certain noble leisureliness, she begins, as the productivity of the settler economy expands, to express more unambiguously a colonial work ethic. By 1914, in The Rhodesian, she is able to celebrate the fact that colonization has brought Rhodesia appreciation and productivity, which its indigenous inhabitants, “a careless black people”, could not provide: “The Valley of Ruins no longer lies alone and unheeded in the sunlight; and no longer do the hills look down upon rich plains left solely to ... idle pleasures” (1).

The “empty” landscape is also depicted as a virginal female. In The Rhodesian, colonisation is the pursuit and penetration of a recalcitrant female wilderness. The generic settler, or male “Path-finder”, conquers and penetrates this wilderness. By implication, the “idle” black inhabitants, who did not bring the land to capitalist productivity, were neither masculine nor penetrators, and thus have no claim to the land. In fact their resistance to colonisation becomes subsumed into and concealed by the image of the virginal and resistant landscape. This personification of the landscape allows Page to account for the difficulties of colonisation without mentioning the indigenous inhabitants of the territory. Through the use of this personification, borrowed from the heroic romance, and because of conventional understandings of feminine sexuality and romance, the possibility of any ongoing resentment by the indigenous inhabitants towards colonial rule is also simply erased. In Page’s image, after the struggles of conquest, the tamed landscape offers her pleasures willingly, indeed she offers the coloniser her ‘gratitude:’

there were moments when the wilderness, tamed at last, like a lovely mistress, became entrancingly docile, fondles the hand, and ravishes the senses of the strong man who conquered it...This glorious sense of ownership. This winsome soothing of shy gratitude when the first resistance of conquest is overpast (11).

In this passage, the heroic trope of penetration shades into an image from the domestic romance. For Page, the ravished wilderness requires husbanding, and the heroic romantic hero becomes a responsible "owner" of almost bourgeois respectability.

The transformation of heroic invader into "husband" is made clear in another of Page's images. Cecil John Rhodes, as husband and father, is given a place alongside the conventional "mother-infant pair" of nationalism (the motherland and her child, the citizen) (Prentice 46). Page imagines Rhodes "enslaved and enfolded" by the Rhodesian landscape, the "enchantress who bound men's souls for ever", and then wonders whether Rhodesia had been "wife and child" to him, in his loneliness (74). Thus Rhodes becomes both father and husband to the Rhodesian nation, impregnating the empty spaces in order to give birth to the new bourgeois nation.

As the image of the "enchantress" suggests, Page often experiences difficulty in presenting the African landscape as uncomplicatedly virginal and passive. In her story "The Falling Gods" she describes the struggles of a pioneer who "had sown all his hopes and dreams into a piece of wilderness, which choked them with weeds and laughed at their slow suffocation" (125). Here Nature, having defeated the efforts of the pioneer, remains a victorious and sexually wanton woman: "Now there was only the wanton, flaunting wilderness round about the little deserted kia" (126).

In "There is Nothing of Any Importance", the hero, Clifton Wentworth, a hunter, military man, adventurer and explorer, finds that his upright English masculinity comes under threat as a result of having "dallied with the virgin forests as a pastime, [having treated] them lightly and [having used] them for his amusement" (57). Through a strange

form of reverse insemination or ravishment, the forests have “vindictively instilled some germ of their own wildness into his blood, making his civilisation only skin deep”, and he is drawn irrevocably into the primal passion of a “fierce, demanding, overpowering love” with a married woman, Maud Naylor (57). Maud Naylor has also been transformed by her encounter with the wilderness. In England, she is a new woman, displaying “wide self-reliance, reticence and fearlessness” (30). When she settles in Rhodesia, however, the wilderness strengthens her physical and spiritual femininity, making her a “glorious woman” (37):

She had always been too thin for her height, and a trifle angular. Now she filled out and acquired a new dignity, and a new depth, and something vaguely mystical behind her steadfast eyes. (37)

While she retains the characteristics of the mannish “new woman” (“her splendid health, her virile personality, her capacity for intense joy or intense sorrow, her fearlessness” [1918:53]), her specifically feminine sexuality now comes to the fore, expressed in terms borrowed from depictions of the primitive racial “other” (a familiar image from the “new woman” fiction):

And as her subtle communion with the wide-spreading veld deepened and crept more and more into her blood, with the essence of wild, untamable things, of primitive instincts, primitive laws and primitive passions, she found herself merging into the personality of one who vaguely waited - waited for something that would come to her out of the silence of the veldt. (37)

In this fascinating moment, the discursive drama highlighted by “Anti-Billingsgate” between the “New Woman” and the “Proper Lady” is augmented by another type altogether, a woman impregnated or seduced by the African landscape and returned to a primitive (European) racial identity. Such moments are common in Stockley’s fiction, though rare in Page’s work. Maud’s waiting ends when she meets Wentworth, and runs away with him to share his hunter’s life and to create a new mode of existence: “Out there in the big solitudes, away from all civilisation, they two, man and woman as God

first made them, could surely weave an Eden for themselves” (67). While Page’s new woman joins her man in his hunting and shooting, she retains responsibility for domestic duties, which he does not share – her new man is more, and not less, masculine, while her new woman is simultaneously more virile and more womanly.

In this story, Page (ultimately governed by a bourgeois perspective) is not completely comfortable with the departures from domestic convention entailed by adultery, and, after the Edenic interlude, Wentworth is killed by one of the elephants he hunts, and Maud loses her sanity.

For Page, the encounters by which the Rhodesian landscape is colonised and made into British territory in fact also leave the settler altered – marked forever by a new Rhodesian identity. In this story, the models for the new identity are expressed particularly clearly. While (as Low shows) Rider Haggard’s revised British masculinity is modeled on his conception of Zulu masculinity, Page’s models are, first, a sexualised wilderness, and, second, the powerful manhood and virile womanhood which she attributes to archetypal human ancestors. (This notion is probably borrowed from the “virile” Teutonic womanhood imagined by Olive Schreiner in Woman and Labour.) In the novels, the destructive “wildness” which ends Maud and Wentworth’s idyll in the short story is tempered and reconciled with domestic values, and can thus be recuperated for a new Rhodesian identity. As will be discussed in chapter 7, Stockley’s cruel feminine wilderness is less easily domesticated.

Page’s writing displays another fundamental contradiction – that between the colonial trope of the free and empty land, and the claustrophobia which, according to Page, is the paradigmatic experience of the “better sort” of British settler woman in Rhodesia. I will discuss the results of this contradiction in more detail in the following

chapter. Nonetheless, the freedom, space and emptiness of Rhodesia remain essential to Page's portrait of the new Rhodesian identity.

The evolution of a Rhodesian national identity in Page's novels does not follow the same pattern found in Stockley's novels. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, Stockley increasingly comes to emphasise the sacrifices and losses of the Risings as the source of settler commitment to their adopted country. For Page, Rhodesian identity is formed in an encounter with the hardships of farm life, and is expressed through a set of sometimes contradictory nationalist and imperialist discourses. These discourses, against the background of a fairly constant identification of Rhodesia with Empire, are marshalled at different historical moments in order to define the Rhodesian nation against a series of "definitional others" which include the Chartered Company, the Union of South Africa, and the excessive masculinity of the "pioneer".

Rhodesian Identity – Early Ambivalences

Settler feelings about Rhodesia in The Edge O' Beyond do not conform to the fully fledged Rhodesian chauvinism displayed in Page's later novels, such as The Rhodesian. Anthony Chennells points out that Page's version of the quest myth is that her heroines "have to undergo a testing by the hardships of frontier life before the subtle beauties of Rhodesia will be revealed to them" (180). In Page's first two Rhodesian novels, the heroines, Dinah and Enid, undergo a "testing" by frontier life, but the "subtle beauties" of the country, though revealed to the heroines, are not enough to convince them to settle. In the case of Enid, the realities almost destroy her. In Page's later novels, the beauty of frontier life comes to compensate for the realities, and her toughened heroines learn to succeed as settlers.

The Edge O' Beyond stages various criticisms of the country and, while the narrative allows most of the harshest criticisms of Rhodesia to be disproved, a general ambivalence remains, and a sense of potential nationhood is felt rather than a fixed national identity. Monotony and social claustrophobia characterise the heroine's initial experience of Rhodesia. Rejecting Ted Burnett's first offer of marriage, Dinah sheds an unromantic light on the country:

I shall not come back to Rhodesia.... your kopjes, and veldt, and corrugated-iron sheds, and everlasting bungalows, and detestable air of newness and beginning, fret me after a little, and I am in haste to be gone. (143)

Cecil Lawson, in passing judgement on the country, finds that the "personality of Africa" is "marred by a certain flaunting, lurid quality" (76). However, the hero, Ted Burnett, is presented as far-sighted and adventurous enough to be able to sense the possibilities which the country presents: "The whole atmosphere is made up of possibilities pleasant and otherwise, which may or may not take place" (77). In moments which develop this positive perspective, the landscape is presented in terms of a romanticised charm ("mystical lights and shades", "wonderful blue veils wrought of Africa's translucent atmosphere"[103]), and the unconventional lifestyles of the Rhodesian characters are depicted as amusingly delightful and mildly shocking to a British audience. For Chennells, the Rhodesian pastoral is directed at a metropolitan audience, and peopled by characters who aim "to instruct, amuse or edify the centres of civilisation which they claim to have deserted" (165).

Although Dinah, after falling in love with Burnett, eventually understands the charm of Rhodesia ("the free untrammelled vigorous life" [217]), and longs for the country when she returns to England, nonetheless the verdict of the novel seems to be that the difficulties of life in Rhodesia are simply too great for well-bred, intelligent, delicate and sensitive British women to settle there – for them, the freedom of Rhodesia

is illusory. The landscape is dotted with “lonely homes of lonely women” (103). One of these lonely and suffering woman, the delicate Joyce, who is unhappily married to the insensitive tyrant Oswald Grant, is eventually forced to flee both her husband and Rhodesia for the haven of England. As pointed out in chapter 2, even the more robust Dinah does not make settler material. Although she is seduced by the charms of Rhodesia when she realises that she is in love with Burnett, she and Burnett honeymoon on his ranch, and after that leave to settle on a farm in England. Dinah’s final verdict on the country is that “[i]t’s a good place to go to – and it’s a good place to get away from” (271).

The perspective adopted in this novel is an example of what Spivak would call feminist individualism – Dinah’s individual development is the central concern of the main plot. Although the fate of other settler women who are trapped in meaningless and lonely domesticity is a matter of concern for Page, this concern is characteristically tempered with snobbery of various types – according to Dinah’s dismissive point of view, only “the colonial ‘Hausfrau’” (62), or else unimaginative, unintelligent, domesticated British women could be expected to settle in Rhodesia. Page’s attractions to a masculinist discourse could thus also be read as arising from her problems with the unpleasantly class-inflected definition of domestic femininity. At the start of the novel, Rhodesia seems like a “mausoleum built of kopjes” (62) to Dinah. Page’s difficulty in settling her first heroine in Rhodesia is the beginning of a struggle which continues throughout Page’s career as a result of her difficulty in reconciling her form of feminist individualism and her class bias against domestic labour with the discourses of natalism. I discuss the development of this struggle in more detail in the next chapter. However, it is an indication of the direction to be taken by Page’s later fiction, when Billy, Dinah’s brother, gives the masculine point of view on settling in Rhodesia, and it is his

perspective on the subject which prevails in Page's later fiction: "England [is] a good place to go home to die in – but a dim, damp, unpleasant place to live in" (279). Chapters 2 and 6 explore in more detail the ways in which Page's later novels redefine the nature of the Rhodesian heroine in order to settle her in the country.

Company and Empire

Around 1909, Page begins to enter the mainstream political debates which establish a Rhodesian identity more firmly. Despite a certain vagueness of definition which arises from Page's tendency to speak of Rhodesia interchangeably with "Empire" or "South Africa", and which is also apparent in the Northern Rhodesian setting of this novel, Southern Rhodesian political issues are high on Page's agenda. The hero of The Silent Rancher, Ranger Metcalfe, takes the heroine, Enid, to view Rhodes's grave in the Matopos. Here he shares his political views with her and talks about Rhodesia's potential in terms of the nation's masculinity: "There is so much real manhood here, so much real grit" (139-40). However, despite this adequate supply of masculinity, Rhodesia is "like a helmless ship, drifting this way and that, not quite sure where to put her faith" (139). He expresses a distrust of both commercial and imperial administration – both of which temporarily function as "definitional others" for his notion of Rhodesia. He sees Rhodesia on the one hand as betrayed by the Chartered Company ("over-eager companies and get-rich-quick company promoters") and on the other hand relegated to the periphery of empire by England and regarded "as a sort of far off detail" "even by those who direct her destiny" (140). Rhodesia lacks, according to him, a "great leader" (140). The embodiment of national identity in the person of one "great leader" of course eliminates many anxieties of identity and belonging, and remains a fantasy of both Page and Stockley throughout their careers.

Metcalf concedes that Rhodesia's immaturity as a nation excludes the possibility of obtaining dominion status: "she is not yet ready to take the reins of government into her own hands" (140). At this stage, the familiar metaphor of maternal neglect takes over, as Ranger compares Rhodesia to "a troublesome child" of the Chartered Company and the Imperial Government.² He finally points out bitterly the possibility of a transfer of "ownership" of Rhodesia to the Transvaal, comparing such a change in government, rather melodramatically, to the callous sale of a child – a "little creature" who was just beginning to feel its feet comfortably" (141). After the publication of The Silent Rancher, Page participated actively in the Union debate, and used her novels to propagandise against Union. In 1909, she wrote to the Rhodesian politician H. Drummond Chaplin, proposing to write a novel which would expose "certain distinctive facts concerning peremptory retrenchments etc. in the Southern States" since, although she had "already stated our position [against Union] very decidedly" in The Silent Rancher, "we shall need to leave no stone unturned if we are to keep our free position" (Dobbin, G.E. Letter to H. Drummond Chaplin). A Southern Rhodesian politician in The Silent Rancher is used as a mouthpiece for Page's political opinions, and airs his views at a dinner party held at Government House in Northern Rhodesia. The politician takes up the metaphor of national maturity as an argument for white settler democracy: "The people of Rhodesia having passed out of the kindergarten stage, are acquiring a very laudable habit of thinking things out for themselves, instead of taking advice off-hand from anyone" (225). For Page's politician, the preservation of the British character of Rhodesia and of the subcontinent would make even the sacrifice of the Southern Rhodesian form of democracy worthwhile: "much as I dislike the idea of Crown Colony government, let us have that sooner than absorption into the Union" (225). According to him, a responsibility for the preservation of the Britishness of

Rhodesia is owed by Rhodesia to “the Rhodesians of the future”, and this responsibility should be dominant over even imperial aspirations towards “the Imperial idea of a United South Africa” (225). In a Union with South Africa, he points out that Rhodesian voters would be totally outnumbered by South African voters. For Page, South Africans are equated with Afrikaners – another speaker terms South Africans (sarcastically) “brother Dutchmen” (224). The “brother Dutchman” becomes one of the major definitional others of the new Rhodesian nation in Page’s later work.

The Southern Rhodesian politician also expresses one of Page’s comparatively rare polemics about Rhodesian racial politics (rather than mere racial invective, which is abundant). He proposes an active policy of “civilisation” of natives, paid for by natives, who, if they resisted, would be “killed learning law and order” (22). Chennells points out that this moment marks the point where Page’s pastoral of freedom (where settlers enjoy the liberties of the wilderness) is ousted by her pastoral of order (where settlers have a duty to cultivate and civilise the wilderness). This pastoral of order is expressed in Page’s later novels in terms of the work ethic, where the bourgeois imperative to make the colony productive reigns supreme. In The Silent Rancher, the colonist’s response becomes the “civilising” impulse, which attempts to impose bourgeois domesticity. Africa, “the wide wilderness”, is represented as “untamed country, untamed wilderness tribes, prowling wild beasts, the fierce antagonism of all that is still uncivilized towards law and order” (219). The politician’s recipe for the ordering of the wilderness includes the civilisation of “the natives”, who are to be uplifted from “filthy, degrading practices and habits, under the filthy, degrading conditions of a life in which disease, and lust and evil run riot”:

every single white man who dwells in Rhodesia owes them enlightenment concerning cleanliness and law and order in the great name of humanity itself There should be medical inspectors throughout the length and breadth of the country, whose chief duty is to cope, not only with diseased, but with the

condition of things that brings the disease; and to stamp out with iron rigour every revolting, degrading practice that still exists (220-221).

In this passage it is clear that Page's notion of "civilisation", like that of most other settlers, was inflected by notions of morality and health. As Diana Jeater points out, "the idea that physical health and sexual 'normality' were inextricably linked" created a "pathology of perversity" in terms of which settlers formulated their notions of "morality" and "civilisation," and which "dominated white discussions of African sexual behaviour" in the colony (35,39). Liberal English imperial authority, in the form of "Exeter Hall", the "sentimentalist", is gendered feminine:

In this question of the natives, if we are to do any good, we must throw down the gauntlet to Exeter Hall, and claim the right of the man on the spot. If I am not very much mistaken, she will end by meeting us halfway. If she does not, we shall still have done our duty (223).

This "right of the man on the spot" in near defiance of imperial authority over racial (and, in this case, sexual) politics is an early foreshadowing of the later Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence. A notion of a specifically Rhodesian "individuality" emerges decisively in The Silent Rancher, although once again subtended by assertions of its essential Britishness. This notion is developed in The Rhodesian, where Page's understanding of Rhodesia's place in the empire becomes less ambivalent.

In his discussion of the myth of the Great Zimbabwe in Rhodesian settler writing, Chennells notes that in The Rhodesian the ruins "are used to inflate the sense of a distinct identity that is beginning to stir in [Page's] characters" (50). Here Page refers to the white Rhodesian population as a "great civilising army" (1) of "Path-finders", "who go away across the world to bring the wilderness into line, to smooth the rough, link the severed, subdue the untamed, and carry prosperity to the waste places" (7).

The national consciousness of The Rhodesian is directed outwards, towards South Africa, which at this time, after Union in 1910, had become a united force in the subcontinent. Page wishes to protect British interests in the new dominion, and is also concerned by the threat that Rhodesia's distinctly British identity could be lost were it to be subsumed into the Union. In this novel, South Africa serves for a while as Rhodesia's definitional other.

Possibly as a result, then, of Page's resolute opposition to the idea of Union, the jocular ambivalences about Rhodesia which are played out in the early novels are emphatically disallowed. Carew, the eponymous "Rhodesian", insistently displays the extent to which his new national identity has subsumed all previous identities: "I was a Devonshire man ... I am a Rhodesian" (16). The deployment of marital alliances in the novel, as discussed in the next chapter, allows Page to construct an image of British control (direct in Rhodesia, and indirect in South Africa) of Southern Africa. (It is only in terms of such British hegemony that Page's politician from The Silent Rancher can imagine Rhodesia joining the Union: "we shall most surely hasten the day in which Rhodesia is in a position to join the Union on acceptable terms" [226]).

Page's loyalties in The Rhodesian, while most emphatically Rhodesian, simultaneously become strongly imperial, thus again smoothing over the "fundamental contradiction" Anderson finds between Empire and nation. No contradiction is expressed between the character Meryl's burning desire to "do some Empire work" because of her "tremendous Imperial instinct", and her eventual destiny, of "mothering" Rhodesia in her capacity as wife of the settler hero (34,336). Because of its defensive outward focus on South Africa, no metaphors of maternal neglect (imperial or Chartered Company) are to be found in this novel.

In The Pathway, Page directs her writing back towards Rhodesian political issues. As Chennells points out, The Pathway's setting of two brothers tributing a mine, "allows Page an opportunity to speak out for the individual settler against the mining companies and the Chartered Company itself" (269). Turning her glance inward, Page again notices a vacuum in the leadership of the colony, which was not apparent when her glance was directed outward towards South Africa.

At this hour, of all others, Rhodesia had need of upright, fearless, clear-seeing men. Big questions in her life and history loomed ahead, were drawing nearer month by month, and only such men as these might save her from becoming the prey of the speculator, the financier, the time-server, and the mean-souled men of self-interests (85).

The hero of this novel, Sir James Fortescue, is a politician. Fortescue, "the backbone of Rhodesian politics" is appropriately well-bred ("a man of means and independence") (25). However, he is "in no way subservient to the Chartered Company, and therefore eminently fitted to be a leader of the people" (25). This character suggests Page's ambivalence about supporting the motley alliance of settlers against the more respectably British and upper-class Chartered Company.

Written under the pressures towards patriotism of the First World War, Page's novel Follow After! stages the fictional defence of a British fort in Northern Rhodesia against German troops (invading from German East Africa). In this novel, the war encourages Page's jingoism. She re-articulates Rhodes' imperial vision of the British empire stretching from "Cape to Cairo" – in this case, however, it becomes Page's version of a Rhodesian imperialism:

a great English Colony north of the Limpopo River, peopled by English settlers, and governed by Englishmen of their own choosing. A great Colony that, after the war, might possibly include Nyassaland, German East Africa, and British East Africa, with their own parliament, and their own traditions and laws, to keep the balance for the British Empire, with the Africander peoples of the south (171).

Rhodesian manhood is seriously beleaguered in Page's later novels. Uncertainties about the quality of Rhodesian manhood are pervasive in Page's later fiction, where her dissatisfaction with Rhodesian masculinity, though still expressed primarily in terms of the pioneer, focuses more on his successor, the new Rhodesian settler who, for Page, is potentially damned by his indeterminate class origins. This shift takes place as Page's increased commitment to a colonial work ethic makes her less sympathetic towards men who expect to enjoy the carefree leisurely lifestyle she depicted in her earliest novels.

Nation: Definitional Others

A central aspect of Page's fictional project is the assertion of a tough, but nonetheless bourgeois British masculinity as the Rhodesian norm. In establishing this, she rejects a heroic, pioneering masculinity. The excessively heroic "pioneering" masculinity of the 1890s is represented as a thing of the past in *The Rhodesian*. While the hero, Carew, admits that certain Native Commissioners behaved like "bounders" in previous days, and did not "live up to the usually accepted standard" (122-3), he indicates that such betrayals of the imperial ideal are no longer tolerated: "things are improving. Almost all new appointments are made among public-school boys and Varsity men" (123). Such thoroughbred British material must, however, undergo the colonial experience to develop – Rhodesia "puts men through the mill again and again to prove and harden them" (117).

Page's primary tactic in establishing this bourgeois norm is her use of definitional others, who either reflect back to the self a favourable image of itself, or else are used to define the boundaries of national identity, by standing for that which is excluded from the self.

The Boer

In several of Page's novels, British manhood is proved when reflected approvingly in the eyes of certain favoured "others". In *The Pathway*, Page, inspired by "the brief

enthusiasm for the Empire's new dominion" is prepared to grant a Boer the status of favoured "other" (Chennells 70). In this story, Page's Boer politician, William van Hert, is shown to be reformable under the influence of the British heroine, although he is initially described as "rabid" (255). For a violent sectarian, however, Van Hert has remarkably positive things to say about the British and about Rhodesia. For instance, he notes enviously that Rhodesia has "some of the cream of England's men". Here Page expresses her myth of the nobility and Britishness of Rhodesians, by terming Rhodesia "The second son's country", populated by "the well-born, high-bred gentleman who was not afraid to work, had never been pampered and was full of the best sportsman's spirit" (60).³ This assertion of noble Britishness occurs despite the fact that, as Ian Phimister points out, the "overwhelming majority" of immigrants to Rhodesia after 1907 were "English-speaking South Africans", and despite the fact that Rhodesia had a substantial Afrikaner settler community (59). (This is another indication that, for Page, an upper-class, and upper-middle class British Rhodesia defined the limits of the imagined bourgeois community.)

Additionally, Van Hert functions to suggest ways in which the Rhodesians are more "civilised" than their Southern neighbours. Although, according to the narrator, Van Hert can be redeemed because of his aristocratic blood and Huguenot ancestors, Page depicts Boer identity in terms which emphasise an unchivalrous persecution of the weak – the oppression of women, and of "natives".

The "Native"

Page's concern about Boer racial attitudes should not be taken at face value. In The Rhodesian, the supreme masculinity of the hero, Carew is established against that of the racial other at the start of the narrative – he has burned the kraal of M'basch, who is a "dangerous native" (15). Thus Page's brief reference to Boer racism functions primarily

to reflect positively upon the British as fair and just, though powerful, in their racial hegemony.

Most black characters in Page's novels are commonly depicted in terms of what Chennells terms "choice racism" (145). However, as "filthy sub-human creatures" they define not so much the limits of the bourgeois nation, but the borderline between animals and humans (Chennells 271). In relation to Page's nationalism, the major role played by black characters in redefining Page's images of domesticity and the domestic woman is discussed in the following chapter.

Follow After! contains the only indication in Page's fiction of the possibility that the boundaries of Britishness might be extended to include black members. However, arising as part of a token generosity towards the nation's "internal" others in times of war or national crisis, the possibility is mentioned only in order to be dismissed as ludicrous. Blacks remain subject to Britain, and cannot, no matter how loyal, attain a British identity. Twilight is the idealised black servant of the novel's hero, Jack Desborough, and aspires to the identity of an Englishman after his experience in "the King's African Rifles". Twilight is a member of the "Northern" Angoni, who, as Chennells points out, are the only positively portrayed black characters in Page's fiction. (Chennells shows that this is entirely in accordance with settler views of the "Northern tribes", who, with the "warlike" Ndebele, were most admired by the British [Chennells 145]). Nonetheless, Page's black Englishman, although utterly faithful and true to the British ideal, remains "not quite not white", in his assertion of Englishness: "Me good soldier. Now an Engleeshman" (20).

In The Rhodesian, Van Hert's envious testimony establishes the ideal masculinity of the British. In The Pathway, the figure who reflects back to the self an unfractured British masculinity is Fortescue's black servant Jim, who dies to save his

master's life. Jim's loyal and adoring glance at the moment of his death serves to establish beyond question Fortescue's status as master: "The boy [Jim] opened his eyes wide and looked once affectionately at his master, and then, with a gasping in his throat, died" (164). Page's relative generosity to South Africa and the Boer as favoured definitional other has faded by the time she writes *The Pathway*. As Chennells points out, Page, thoroughly disenchanted with Union, and fearing an influx of poor-white Afrikaners into Rhodesia, can only depict the Boer in terms of "the ordinary stereotype backvelder" – the villainous Van Tyl (270). The novel's other villains, the pioneer Denison and the African Shagann, make up the complement of Page's repertoire of villainous definitional others. Denison, as "pioneer", is another expression of Page's anxieties about those "internal" others who threaten the domestic values of her bourgeois Rhodesia, and which she wishes to exclude from her definition of "settler".

The Pioneer

Page's novels often have an English "definitional other" by which they define what the ideal Rhodesian is not, and this white "other" is most often the pioneer. The pioneer in Page's novels is almost invariably a man who plans to abduct or seduce the heroine (or some other innocent young British girl) into adultery. Page's ambivalence about the "early days" of Rhodesia becomes apparent in her portrayal of these villains. Although she finds it important to condone (or partially condone) the violence perpetrated by British and Rhodesian troops in the Risings of 1896 and 1897, she sees as marks of the degenerate colonial filibuster the cruelty to "natives" which was perpetrated outside the context of war and the "episodic looting of the 1890's" (Phimister 47). The effect of this villainization of the pioneer is to locate in one marginalised and villainized character all anxieties and guilt about the dubious "acquisition" and excesses of masculinity of

Rhodesia, and, by implication, to indemnify Page's contemporary Rhodesia from accusations of racial cruelty.

George Whiteing, the pioneer character in Love in the Wilderness, left England for mysterious and suspicious reasons in order to join the pioneers in Rhodesia, intending "to swell the great army of flotsam and jetsam which drifts yearly out of the little island home, to find a new path in a new land" (11). However, Whiteing is not the sort of "Pathfinder" idealised in Page's later novels. He displays all the qualities for which the "pioneers" were celebrated – bravery, fearlessness, hardiness and adventurousness – yet Page indicates his brutal nature by revealing his excessive cruelty: "he had a reputation of which he was not in the least ashamed, of having perpetrated cruelties upon natives who offended him, which made men indignant and women sick" (12). Thus his "cold-blooded indifference to death" in the "native wars" is not, after all, to be read as a positive characteristic. The pioneer, like the Boer, does not understand the British gentleman's military code of values.

An almost identical villain pops up again in The Pathway. Blake, "one of the earliest pioneers", also has a "doubtful past" (27). A "dare-devil of the most virile type, to whom fear was unknown, and pity too, a man who stopped at nothing to achieve his end, and usually did achieve it", Blake also displays "cold-blooded cruelty" in the Rebellions, "which men shrank from yet must fain condone because it was regarded as a retaliation for the hellish cruelty of the blacks" (28). His speedy "stocking" of his farm is attributed to raids upon "native cattle" and "a system by which he paid for a cow with a handful of beads" (28). Like the Boer, the pioneer does not display the British gentleman's chivalry towards women. His treatment of white women is based on "conquest" after which the "feeble creatures" are "to be cast ruthlessly aside" (64). Blake's personality is summed up as being a "product of the border country – the man

who had come in the early days, solely to take and with no idea of giving" (96). Blake is allied with Van Tyl, the Boer villain, whose crimes include "wrongful looting", the selling of information to the Boers, the abduction of a young British girl, and fraternising with a "low class of niggers" (73-5). Both are white characters who inhabit and threaten the dangerous "border" between the British colony and the racial "otherness" from which the colony must be distinguished.

This "pioneer" character appears again, in the guise of a more sophisticated villain, in "Where the Strange Roads Go Down". Here Nita Dubeen, the young English bride of a Rhodesian farmer, is saved on the brink of committing adultery with Aubrey St. Leger Denison, who has coldly plotted her seduction. Denison, as a "gay young pioneer" lived the wild life of the filibuster (85). Nita, however, is seduced by the romantic glamour of Denison's pioneering image:

"But what thrilling times you must have had!" Nita leaned forward, with eyes lit by enthusiasm "Oh, I'd love to have been a man, and come up here then, and felt I was a real pioneer" (237).

Denison then describes to Nita his experiences in "the '91 rebellion" (perhaps referring to the Matabele War of 1893). Although he pretends to be disillusioning Nita of her romantic notions of the pioneer, he is, in fact, presenting her with the chivalrous "women and children" version of the Rising. Denison's reference to the "dreadful, untellable" things that he witnessed in the Rising is about the closest that Page gets to using an image of dead or raped British women in all her 16 novels.

"I'll never forget when I rode up to a farm-house during the '91 rebellion, and found the father and mother and six children in a row – all assegaied."

"White people? ... How dreadful!"

"Yes, English people. The natives were devils in those days – and we got all the blame. We saw things that filled us with concentrated fury – dreadful, untellable things – and then we were censured at home for our cruelty. Well, it's over now. Don't let's talk of it." (237).

Work Ethic

In Page's first Rhodesian novel The Edge O' Beyond, the colonial work ethic is ridiculed. This is rather unusual in the context of colonial discourse. As J.M. Coetzee points out, the common assumptions behind European horror at colonial "idleness" originate in the Reformation, where work is "the fundamental divine edict" (20), and in the Enlightenment, where idleness is a "betrayal of one's humanity" (21). In the colonial context, it is important that the colonist be hard-working "since in order to justify its conquests colonialism has to demonstrate that the colonist is a better steward of the earth than the native" (31).

Page's ridicule of the work ethic should not, however, be read as a subversion of this discourse of colonialism, but should rather be seen in the context of her snobbery, which, in this early text allows idleness to be read as aristocratic leisure rather than repugnant sloth. Page's lack of interest in depicting Rhodesian settlers as excellent "stewards of the earth" in The Edge O' Beyond should also be read in the context of the history of Rhodesia's early agricultural failures.

Phimister points out the "bleak" prospects for settler farms in the early years of settlement, and cites a leading company official, who commented in 1898 "Farming ... meant only cutting down trees and selling the wood, or cultivating a small patch of mielies" (qtd in Phimister 58). This situation was exacerbated, until 1903, by the rinderpest and other cattle diseases (Phimister 58).

After 1904, the prospects for commercial farming "brightened perceptibly", according to Phimister, and with this started a gradual increase in immigration of farmers to the territory (59). However, until 1907, the year before the publication of The Edge O' Beyond, settler farmers were disadvantaged compared to miners under the local law, and this created great discontent. As Phimister points out, "settler discontent had reached unprecedented heights during 1906 and 1907 when it

culminated in a Legislative Council motion calling for an end to Chartered rule". This persuaded the British South Africa Company to begin actively promoting "settler agriculture and land settlement", and as a result, the immigration of farmers after 1907 increased by "roughly 20 percent per annum" between 1907 and 1911 (Phimister 59-62).

As shown in chapter 3, Ted Burnett manages to be Page's model colonist without being a model farmer. As a result of Page's snobbery it is, in fact, part of Burnett's appeal as hero that he fits more closely the mould of gentleman of leisure than that of the industrious yeoman. Burnett's farming consists of:

much prowling round with his gun; with occasional intervals of sowing seed, which invariably came up in most annoying patches – superintending the curing of bacon and ham – and strolling round to yarn with other healthy young demonstrators of the "simple life" (32).

Other male characters in the novel, such as the heroine's brother and his friends, affectionately termed "the Irresponsibles", display an even more relaxed approach to work, earning the amused scorn of the heroine, Dinah, who is fresh from England, and unused to Rhodesian approaches to work. Dinah exclaims to her brother, Jim, about his relaxed method of farming "I've not seen you do anything in the week I've been here but laze and smoke and sleep" (45). In reply to Dinah's frustrated question "Why don't you make money?" Jim replies "But if we've got to bother about making money, ... we might as well be in England. We came out here because we thought we shouldn't need any clothes, and so shouldn't have to work" (146). However, these characters are sufficiently upper-class to be able to afford such demonstrations of disregard for propriety. According to Chennells "[Page's Eden] will only satisfactorily be inhabited by the British upper-classes" whose "tramp-like clothes represent an act of free will" rather than genuine poverty (182).

The most negatively portrayed character in the novel is Oswald Grant, "a tall spare figure of a man, with a very marked stoop, and a general looseness about his

whole aspect that was not entirely ingratiating" (16). As Grant Lilford points out, Grant is "an avatar of the Protestant work ethic" in a novel which makes a mockery of such puritanism (95). Grant is the most hard-working character in the novel, but his hard work is not elevated to the almost mystical levels later occupied by work in Page's imperialist cosmology. Instead, Grant is mercilessly ragged by the other characters for the sanctimoniousness of his work ethic and for his pretensions to nobility:

Looking over his lands now, he indulged in a pleasurable reverie concerning their fertility, and congratulated himself that, whereas it was somewhat the fashion to decry Rhodesia as an agricultural country, he had succeeded in wrenching some sort of success and a measure of return, from the wilderness. But then, of course, he had worked. Never, for a moment had he spared the sweat of his brow; and that, he thought, was no small thing, considering he was the great-grandson of an earl The future beckoned to him. He saw himself Minister of Agriculture at least, and beyond that – fairest vision of all – lurked ever the possibility that those uncles and cousins would conveniently die, and open his path to the earldom" (12).

This work ethic is exposed as a form of vanity and solipsism: "[Grant] managed to derive a good deal of self-satisfaction from the contemplation of his own great industry" (51).

While despising Grant's attitude, Dinah nonetheless adopts a missionary-like stance towards the young loafers of the country, bemoaning their lack of productivity, and blaming it on the pleasant Rhodesian environment: "you all get steeped in your precious kopjes like the Indians in opium, and you develop a tendency to just bask in the sun and get no "forrader", because it is so warm and pleasant and simple" (103). Behind her attitude lies a drive to further the imperialist ideal: "it isn't the way empires are built and chasms bridged, and mountains bored, and highways cut, and continents watered" (103). Dinah derides Burnett (the model colonist) for "playing at farming among the kopjes in Rhodesia" (103). In response, Burnett points out that the difficulties of farming in Rhodesia disallow the "rags to riches" success stories of other colonies:

It's pretty expensive though...If you don't happen to have private means, or, at any rate, not less than eight-hundred pounds capital, you'll probably go under. That is why it is so difficult for the genuine hard-working emigrant to come here Living is dear, and the mining industry gets most of the consideration, and there appears to be a special disease for every different kind of stock; and floods lying in wait for whatever the locusts leave. But the outlook is more hopeful again now, as the Chartered Company have sent an expert out to watch over the agricultural interests, and develop farming generally. (104)

Dinah's negative attitude is thus partially revealed as ignorance about local conditions, and the leisurely and aristocratic unproductiveness of the "Irresponsibles" is never criticised in earnest. As Chennells points out, neither Grant nor Dinah understands the meaning of Rhodesia in terms of the pastoral of freedom which Page constructs in the novel: "[i]n trying to make his farm productive and complaining endlessly of Company incompetence [Grant] has, like Dinah, missed the point of what Rhodesia is about: a place to live" (196).

Ironically, as Dobbin's ranching prospered, Page began to be more and more attracted by the image of the suffering, hardworking colonist bent under the "white man's burden". The early struggles of the Rhodesian farmers are depicted as "playing at farming" partially in order to deflect the criticism that Rhodesia might, after all, not be worth colonising. Settler farming became a more productive and capitalist pursuit, however, and Page and her husband moved from managing an estate to owning a farm and finally to running a large cattle ranch. When looking back at the experiences of the relatively prosperous generation of established white farmers (in comparison to the impoverished emigrants who arrived after 1910) to which she and Dobbin belonged, Page emphasises the sacrifices they have made in order to establish prosperity. Predictably, the destruction of black agriculture which underlay the success of white farmers goes unnoticed in Page's novels.

Settler reminiscences claim that Where the Strange Roads Go Down has autobiographical elements (Townsend 58). The novel begins with the following epigraph from Kipling:

We were dreamers, dreaming greatly, in the man-stifled town.
 We yearned beyond the sky-line where the strange roads go down.
 Came the Whisper, came the Vision, came the Power with the Need
 'Til the Soul that is not man's soul was lent to us to lead.
 As the deer breaks – as the steer breaks – from the herd where they graze,
 In the faith of little children we went on our ways.
 Then the wood failed – then the food failed – then the last water dried –
 In the faith of little children we lay down and died.
 On the sand-drift – on the veldt-side – in the fern-scrub we lay.
 That our sons might follow after by the bones on the way.
 Follow after! – follow after! we have watered the root,
 And the bud has come to blossom that ripens for fruit!
 Follow after! We are waiting, by the trails that we lost,
 For the sound of many footsteps, for the tread of a host.
 Follow after! – follow after! For the harvest is sown:
 By the bones about the wayside ye shall come to your own!⁴

Having marginalised, demonised and “othered” the filibustering “pioneer” who betrays the imperial cause in his unbridled self-interest, Page assumes for her generation of farmers the pioneering role lauded in Kipling’s poem, an entirely unselfish preparing of the way for the “host” of colonisers who will follow, a sacrifice of life itself in the cause of Empire.

Page also addresses herself, through the heroine, Joe Lathom, to the next generation of Rhodesian settlers, who, she claims, expect to have things easy, and are concerned only with quick profits:

Nowadays our young settler expects to have everything so cut and dried and easy for him, whether he has been through any rough times or not. The maximum of gain, for the minimum of expenditure (147).

Once again, this unsatisfactory state of affairs is blamed on the weakening manhood of Britain – Joe comments in disgust that she has heard that “school-boys take hot-water bottles to school now”, and that such boys will be of no use in the colonies, unless “knocked into shape out there” (147). The Bishop with whom Joe is conversing replies

gravely that the “manliness of the race in England is on the downward grade”, and that the English “look to the colonies” for a replenishment of their virility (147). In contradiction of her other claims about Rhodesia’s capacity to convert “a milksop, pink and blue mother’s darling” into a specimen of true manliness, Joe’s reply to the bishop allows a note of uncertainty to weaken her conviction (49). According to Joe, the manliness of the colonies is threatened with degeneration because of the easy availability of black labour.

The black race is a drawback to the sturdy development of the white. It makes the shirker shirk more than ever. It makes prigs and tyrants of our children and youths. It turns the honest white labourer into a nondescript upstart – too big to do the homely things he has always been ready to do before he had a black boy to wait on him. If we had all white labour in Rhodesia, and no black – goodness, what a country! What a splendid school to flood with all England’s youth of whatever station! But now, your unfledged stripling, unless he has genuine backbone, is more often spoilt than otherwise (147).

The results of the exploitation of black labour are blamed partially on the very presence of “the black race”. Page does not propose the ending of the exploitation of black labour, but rather the expansion of the white nation, so that the black race can be entirely excluded from the Rhodesian picture.

While Page positively glamorised the leisurely lifestyle possible in Rhodesia in The Edge O’ Beyond and was capable of joking in 1910, in Jill’s Rhodesian Philosophy about new settlers’ perceptions that Rhodesia would allow them to make a fortune while “niggers” would do all the work, by 1913 the work ethic which Joe expresses has become almost as sanctimonious as that of the preachy Oswald Grant. The above image of Rhodesian manhood is an unusually negative one (for Page) of a “spoilt” nation of “shirkers”.

Joe criticises the new immigrants to Rhodesia who, she claims, expect instant success in Rhodesia, while Joe’s own prosperity was dear-bought after years of hard work, poverty and suffering:

The trouble nowadays seems to me that men go out, with all the improved conditions, and expect to start off on a level with the men who worried through the bad times at the beginning. And they were bad times ten years ago. For five years we could make no headway at all. It wasn't a case of living from hand to mouth. It was a case of bargaining with an unreaped, possibly unsown crop, for a few necessaries. Pest and disease ran riot in those days; and the settler might sink or swim – few cared (39).

Page's narrator presents the Lathoms' eventual prosperity as a reward for their bravery and endurance:

And in the end their pluck was rewarded, for after being on the verge of bankruptcy for a weary period, and pulling things round, after ten years they found themselves the delighted possessors of a beautiful cattle ranch, with their own big game and lion preserves, and a smiling success ahead (13).

Claims of the easy life possible in Rhodesia are refuted emphatically. Joe comments:

“The Chartered Company call it the Land of Sunshine, and Promise, and Milk and Honey, but you've got to work jolly hard to find the honey” (34).

Unlike Page, whose national archetypes and definitional “others” are all evaluated in terms of the presence or absence of a bourgeois manliness, Stockley's national archetype, the pioneer, is usually anti-bourgeois, and almost always anti-domestic in his heroic masculinity. Stockley's most powerful definitional “others”, however, are all feminine figures, who are discussed in chapter 7.

Cynthia Stockley: The Freedom of the Heroic Pioneer

It is clear that Stockley's first novel, Virginia of the Rhodesians, constructed a Rhodesian identity which foregrounded the romantic and sexual unconventionality of Rhodesian life. As a new Rhodesian settler, Sheila Macdonald wrote humorously in a letter to an English friend that her mother, having read the novel, “is filled with fear lest it may be impossible for the feet of her virtuous daughter to continue to tread the right path in this land of sin” (Sally in Rhodesia 170). This slightly licentious atmosphere is continued in most of Stockley's Rhodesian novels, although her later work is less sexually unconventional – the erotically charged atmosphere is embodied primarily in

the image (borrowed from the heroic romance) of the land as a sexually available woman. This image also allows Stockley to partially resolve the ambiguities of freedom and entrapment, delight and suffering which for her constitute Rhodesian identity. This image depicts the land as an enticing and enslaving woman which pierces settlers with her “claw”, and then never lets go. She applies the same images to South Africa, Rhodesia and Africa more generally. Her heroes are depicted as languishing under the sway of a powerful and feminised landscape – “Africa has kissed him on the mouth and he will not leave her” (178).

An Emptied Landscape

Chennells points out that, as in the case of Page, Stockley’s discourses of the Rhodesian landscape are based upon an image of an “empty landscape”. The nature of the landscape destines it for habitation by a white race, as Stockley’s fictional Jameson claims in his speech before the Matabele War, where he “empties” the landscape by presenting the eventual extinction of the Mashona by the Ndebele – the indigenous presence in the landscape is denied by the prediction of an inevitable genocide: “this wide lovely land calls for some nobler destiny than to be the necropolis of the wretched Mashona nation. It is a white man’s country ...” (The Claw 99).

Occasionally, Stockley transposes this “emptiness” into her idea of the limitless space of Rhodesia, which permits freedom and an expansion of the “soul”:

The world seemed filled with gracious dimness and made up of illimitable space. An indescribable feeling of happy freedom filled my heart. It seemed to me that the lungs of my soul drew breath and expanded as they had never done in any land before (The Claw 11).

This new-found freedom is experienced by her heroine, Deirdre, as a potential sexual freedom:

And now, alone, with him in this wild and desolate spot, where conventions and all the superficialities of life fell sheer away, and left us just simple man

and woman, I was afraid of the poignant sweetness and wonder of it. I was afraid for my immortal soul (33).

Stockley's descriptions of this "uninhabited" space do sometimes include an awareness of indigenous inhabitants, who are present on the margins of her novels, but who do not in any way affect her definition of the spaces as "uninhabited". As in the case of Page, the sense of "emptiness" does not appear to depend so much on the erasure of all traces of the presence of indigenous inhabitants, but on an assumption that they have forfeited their claim to the landscape.

In 1930, in her novel Tagati, Stockley addresses for the first time the dispossession of blacks in the colonisation of Rhodesia. A Catholic priest, Father Drago, asks rhetorically at a Rhodesian dinner table: "do any of you consider that the native of this country has a square deal?" and explains native dispossession "of customs, codes, lands" to his unsympathetic audience (332). However, Father Drago, though sympathetically presented, has "the bright eye of the fanatic" (331). His views, and their counterpoint, the bigotry of the settlers, are included as extreme perspectives. The hero, Fenn, occupies a middle position, and he proposes a different solution to the Rhodesian "Native Problem" – Union with South Africa (331).

This means that, although Stockley demonstrates a distinct Rhodesian patriotism and anti-Dutch sentiment in her 1911 novel, The Claw, by 1930, in Tagati, Stockley's nationalism has swung in the direction of Union with South Africa. The moderate Fenn argues for Rhodesian Union with South Africa as a solution to the racial tensions in the subcontinent. The discreteness of Rhodesian identity remains, but it is an identity which Stockley criticises more than in other novels: "Rhodesians are a race apart, and it is one of their idiosyncrasies to cling together. They know they are bad people; still, they are convinced that is better to be a bad Rhodesian than a good anything else" (29).

Rhodesian isolation is portrayed as a betrayal of Rhodes's imperialist dream:

We should be in the Union at this moment if [Rhodes] were alive. Do you suppose he meant Rhodesia to be a little isolated community of people sitting in the middle of a continent, supporting themselves by taking in each other's washing? Rhodes thought universally. Extension with Union was his idea. He knew it was the only hope for the whites of South Africa. (337).

The speaker in this passage, Fenn, argues for Union in terms of his perception of a beleaguered white community in Southern Africa:

you have a small white community, mentally alert and physically active, as against an immense black community, mentally otiose, but physically fitter and more active than we are, because it's their climate, and has been for countless centuries. They increase at an alarming rate, we very slowly, and it's only a matter of time – a simple economic fact – before white is swamped by black (331) (Stockley's emphases).

Fenn's suggestions that Rhodesians should have joined Union is greeted by general derision., which allows Stockley to mock the anti-Boer sentiment of the settlers and all the characteristic slogans of Rhodesian identity:

"Union forsooth! What do we know of Union? ... or care? We are RHODESIANS! A free people ... English of the English. No dirty Bojers up here, thank you! ... No taal for us!" (335).

At this point, Stockley rejects, under the pressure of larger, racial loyalties, the discreteness and superiority of a Rhodesian identity – Fenn's ideas undermine the assumptions of Rhodesian nationalism, and the narrator explains that the idea of Rhodesians as "a race apart, superior to and far in advance of anything to be found down South" is an immature political perspective, of "youthful lightheads, and thoughtless we-are-a-race-apart-boosters" (335). This final about turn is ironic, given Stockley's crucial role in constructing the very Rhodesian identity she criticises in Tagati.

National Archetype: The Pioneer

For much of Stockley's career, the essence of Rhodesian identity is defined in terms of the events and experiences of the 1890s. Her first heroine, Virginia Chanbrooke, briefly explains the origins of her Rhodesian identity: "I am chiefly and above all things a

Rhodesian Everyone who has been through the Matabele War and the rebellion of '96 feels like that" (235). As will be demonstrated in chapter 6, this brief reference is expanded considerably in Stockley's later fiction, where her initially domestic focus shifts to accommodate the military and pioneering spaces of heroic 1890s masculinity into her definition of Rhodesian life. Yet what remains unchanged in Stockley's fiction is the way her nationalism, based on a nostalgia for the "early days" of settlement, centres around the figure of the pioneer, whether he is depicted as disreputable and feckless, or as intensely masculine and heroic, or as some combination of the two.

Virginia suggests that the "free life" and "Oh-let-things-rip" atmosphere is primarily what attracts men to Africa (109). In this novel, Stockley's attitude wavers between amusement at innocently irresponsible pioneers such as Kat, and a celebration of the freedom of the heroically masculine hunter, Gayer Waybrant. Kat (whose real name, Gerald Verney Bosanquet, suggests noble origins) is too poor to marry, but has a wife "thrust suddenly upon him" (32). His worldly possessions, boosted by occasional remittances from his family, amount to "a dog, some claims, and a farm which the Company had given him because he was a pioneer" (30). An absentee landholder, his attitude to this "farm" is entirely negative. Though he has built a house there, he has no furniture, and complains to Virginia about the need to marry and settle down: "I never go there from one month's end to the other" (30). Gayer Waybrant is also of noble birth, with "just enough brothers to make his chance of the family title and treasure hopeless" (63). A hunter who moves about Africa in search of lions, Waybrant's hunting activities, (although vaguely depicted, owing to the domestic focus of the novel) are central to his identity.

Throughout Stockley's career, the Rhodesian pioneer is either regarded with amused tolerance or with intense admiration, but is never villainised. However, whether

he is intensely heroic, or ineffectual and disreputable, he never fully conforms to the requirements of the bourgeois romance.

Chennells points out that, after Stockley's brief peak of patriotism in The Claw, her later concept of a Rhodesian identity embraces anti-bourgeois ingredients of unproductiveness and cynical disillusionment:

Stockley, in Ponjola, provides herself with a chance to examine how far the early promise of Rhodesia had been realized in her settlers and the answer would seem to be hardly at all. The settlers are as feckless as they are in Virginia of the Rhodesians, the occasional disillusionment of The Claw pervades everyone, but a Rhodesian identity is asserted more aggressively than in either of the earlier novels. And there is little content in the identity except shared hardship. (249)

In Ponjola, Stockley's disreputable hero, Lundi Druro, has two even more disreputable friends, nicknamed the "Count" and "Sherry" (both are mining adventurers). Desmond, the cross-dressing heroine, is introduced to these two as "true Rhodesians" – they qualify for this appellation in their addiction to alcohol, their precarious financial positions, and their interest in selling "dud properties" or dud horses (48). The Rhodesian women regard this pair with a mixture of disgust, cynicism, sadness and amusement. Desmond, who initially shares the women's reservations, is able to discover different facets of their personalities, owing to her masculine disguise, and soon finds himself drawn to their warm friendship, especially that of Sherry: "Wonderful country,' thought Desmond, when he presently found the two mining adventurers talking to him like old friends" (46). Behind Sherry's alcohol-reddened eyes and mismatched clothing, Desmond notes an "impression of childlike confidence and ingenuousness" (46).

In contrast to these pioneers, the villain, Constant Lypiatt, is a well-to-do mine owner, who superficially satisfies the requirements of bourgeois respectability. However, his commitment to Rhodesia is nonexistent (his "one great ambition" is to "make a pile

and clear out”, and it is later revealed that his prosperity is the result of dishonest dealing). This unusual disloyalty to Rhodesia awakens Desmond’s dislike (52). Despite their less than prosperous state, the Count and Sherry are unshaken in their allegiance to Rhodesia, which Stockley depicts for both its irony and its pathos. She shows them chanting “Rhodesia is a white man’s country ... Finest place in the world” (48).

The disreputable qualities (“coatless, red-eyed, blackened by the sun”) of the pioneering “mining men” are not villainised, but rather romanticised. They are “[h]ardened picturesque fellows”, accustomed to the freedoms of the pioneer: “Some of them had been in the country since it was first opened up; pioneers who had lived as they liked and done as they pleased” (52).

Stockley’s embrace of pioneering masculinity wavers around the issue of alcohol. In this novel, drunkenness is a peculiarly Rhodesian male trait – the novel’s title, *Ponjola*, is glossed as “booze”. Stockley laments alcoholism as a perilous obstacle to colonial productivity “the peril of *ponjola*, the beast that never tires”, but the novel is certainly not simply a moral crusade against the evils of alcohol, in the manner of the sentimental Temperance tale with which Snyman confuses it.

Stockley is able to recuperate a romanticised view of male camaraderie, despite her criticism of the crucial role played by alcohol in this drinking culture. Desmond is introduced to the masculine space of the club, where “no woman had ever set foot”, and which is suffused by “an odour of whisky and good fellowship” (62). She wonders about the way in which the men encourage one another to drink, “as though it was a mark of high esteem to help a man rot his kidneys and blur his brain” (63). Desmond accompanies the men on a picnic designed to remove the Count from the temptation of alcohol, but which soon degenerates into a drinking spree. The narrator’s depiction is sympathetic:

Most of them were good-tempered and amusing, one or two really witty. Drink had not yet dulled their senses and ruined their bodies. On the contrary, it seemed to put an edge to their sense of enjoyment. And Africa was their friend. As fast as they flung the drink down she sweated it out of them again with her torrid sunshine. There was no real vice in any of them, and Desmond, who had come in a spirit of mockery, did not keep up that attitude. You might just as well have mocked a lot of boys out on a lark (76).

Recounting the stories of masculine spaces (such as the mine, the hunt and the club), the narrator is occasionally seduced by the masculine discourse of the drinking anecdote, in which the excesses of drunkenness are not only tolerated, but are essential to the success of the anecdote's humour. The narrator recounts "the story of a hardened old-timer", who, enraged by the arrival of civilisation in the form of a railway engine, "became hysterical with rage and had to be led away by his pals, have whisky carefully poured down his throat, and to complete his cure, be shown a span of oxen ready for the trek" (53). The effect of alcohol on Sherry is to increase, rather than decrease, his rational powers: "the more he drank the soberer he seemed to become, the wiser in his counsels" (56).

Stockley was publicly reprimanded by a Rhodesian politician for allowing this negative image of Rhodesia to become current by popularising it in Ponjola. Undaunted, in 1930, Stockley sketched in her novel Tagati a notoriously alcoholic politician:

Every four weeks or so ... he is off on the tear. Gets chattering drunk. Bounces about all over the country from club to club and pub to pub, chattering like a magpie. This cheery period is followed by an owl-like reserve which signifies that he is getting back on to the tack. A few days later he resumes politics...And then certain people at home go about making speeches to the effect that no one drinks in this country (30)

There are moments in Ponjola when drinking is viewed with humorous tolerance:

"Every good man in Rhodesia can mop up the ponjola" (56). Perhaps in response to the moral outcry against Ponjola, in Tagati tolerance largely makes way for pity. While occasional moments of jocular humour do occur ("when a good Rhodesian dies he is poured back into the bottle") Tagati's amiable drinker, Dick Cardross, is presented as

dependent on alcohol and a victim of his own relaxed good nature, his wife's infidelities and unreasonable demands, and of the unco-operative Rhodesian landscape (209).

However, although Tagati is less tolerant about alcoholism, Stockley still romanticises the Rhodesia of the pioneers. The heroine's father, Sir John Lissell, was an adventurer "made of the same stuff as Richard Burton, and Livingstone" (28). As a result of her travels with her father, the heroine meets the "pioneering men who came up with, or in the wake of Rhodes and Dr. Jim" (28), and is in touch with "wanderers, black sheep, exiles and expatriates, weathered as old sandstone some of them, others young but weathered, too; bitter, blithe, careless, hard livers, hard drinkers, often rank adventurers, but always with some unforgettable quality predominant in them" (29). The pioneer in this novel, Yank Breddon, though not the hero, plays a crucial role in exposing the murderous deeds of the villainess. The figure of Yank, and Felicia's experience of the 1890s, allow Stockley to take issue with the bourgeois respectability by which Page and Jollie redefine the ideal Rhodesian settler. One of her characters attacks modern Rhodesian snobbery, arguing that no-one could afford to be snobbish in the early days of Rhodesia:

Rhodes wasn't like that, or Dr. Jim either. They didn't ask Rhodesians to be nice little gentlemen and Public School boys. If they had there wouldn't have been a place called Rhodesia on the map. It was the scallywags of the world – under-bred as well as over-bred – who opened up this land and laid their bones here as a foundation for us to build on (70).

This passage is reminiscent of Page's image of the "bones about the wayside", which she employs in order to canonise her generation of respectable Rhodesian settlers as the pioneers of Rhodesia's prosperity. It is clear that a definition of settler nationalism not only requires a struggle over which "other" is the primary "definitional other" of the new nation, but also requires a struggle over the choice of the founding archetypes for the citizens of the new nation.

Stockley does not denigrate the pioneer, rather choosing to impugn the credentials of a later generation of immigrants, “those who come in the wake of pioneers, for whom the rough has already been made smooth” (279). (Page displays an identically dismissive attitude – but in her case it is directed towards the immigrants who came to Rhodesia after she herself did.) In contrast to Page’s fervent work-ethic, Stockley’s nostalgia for the 1890s, and her dislike for the latter-day bourgeois respectability of Rhodesia lead her to dismiss the imperial ideal of progress:

[Salisbury in the early days was] the camping ground of adventurers and adventuresses, and life a gay and amusing tussle. Strange, outrageous and heroic deeds were all in the daily round of those early days, of which the few ‘old hands’ left in the country speak so wistfully. These people you see now, all vying with each other to be the best-dressed, give the best dinners, make the newest cocktail, and own the latest kind of car, are the after-comers that always push along in the wake of pioneers, and come in when the rough has been made smooth for them. They bring the stale old ways of cities with them, one more wild spot is added to the list of ‘civilised places’ and Progress waves its flag (271).

Work Ethic

Page, after 1909, begins to present the possibility of prosperity for Rhodesian farming: Stockley, however, never entirely discards the early images of unproductive Rhodesian farms and idle Rhodesian farmers, and, while the Rhodesian patriotism of The Claw causes a surge of optimism about Rhodesia’s prospects, this optimism soon wanes. Stockley’s relatively constant encouragement of a work ethic gives rise to one of the important clashes in her work between the bourgeois perspective of the domestic romance and the freedoms from bourgeois responsibility desired by the heroic romance.

I have pointed out that in Page’s early novels “idleness” takes on an aura of nobility, leisure and freedom from convention. In a slight variation on this, Stockley’s pioneers in Virginia are gently and tolerantly mocked for their fecklessness. The noble birth of her hero, Gayer Waybrant, makes his subsistence upon an unexpected legacy from England entirely appropriate.

Chennells points out that Stockley's attitude to settler hardship acquires an aura of "noble pathos" in the patriotic The Claw, but it returns to a "tolerant irony" in Ponjola (246,250). Settler improvidence in Ponjola results from a blind and lazy optimism, where Rhodesian farmers "[potter] around the homestead generally, using it as a base from which to make excursions to the nearest town on the pretext of business". Although these "farmers" only have "microscopic herds of cattle", they spend their time dreaming of future prosperity (45). The dominant mental attitude in Rhodesia, according to Stockley's narrator, is "careless content, a lazy dreaminess, a delightful ticklish sensation at the back of the scalp, and a mental attitude of don't give a damn" (44). This laziness is a characteristic not only of farmers, but also of the bourgeois strata of the mining sector – the "manager" of a mine in Rhodesia has "unlimited time to indulge in anything ... politics, picnics, patriotism and Empire building" (73).

By 1925, however, some of Stockley's tolerance is running out. In a short story, a character comments about Rhodesia as follows: "Rhodes opened it up as a realm of rest for rotters" ("The Dice of God" 136). In a different novella, the narrator cynically describes the labours of a Rhodesian farmer:

their "work" consists mainly of talking a great deal about the wonderful things they intend to do in the future, discussing breeds of cattle, and trekking backwards and forwards as often as possible to town. ("Three Farms" 39)

In 1930, in Tagati, Stockley still considers the defining Rhodesian characteristics to be "blind contentment with things as they are, mingled with a fatalistic conviction that it's no use trying to change them" (81). The setting for most of the action of this novel is the farm "Manana", so named because, according to its owner "I never do today what I can put off till to-morrow. Rank libel, of course. I work just as hard as the next man – if that's saying anything" (23). By this stage, then, the discourse of idleness is far from a patriotic discourse in Stockley's texts, and

often functions in her work to dispel the bourgeois pretensions of the latecomers to Rhodesia whose impecunious, though settled state lacks the romantic freedoms of the heroic pioneer.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the major themes in Page's and Stockley's rather different narratives of Rhodesian identity have been explored. Discourses of bourgeois British masculinity play a crucial role in establishing Page's notion of Rhodesia, especially in her later work. In the later novels, Page's superficially confident masculinity is in fact a rather anxious identity, which clings to the skirts of its British imperial mother, longs for a national father figure, and obsessively defines itself against threatening nightmare images – those various racial, class and national "others" with which it is forbidden to play. Stockley's heroic masculine archetype, which initially made the entire African continent its home, is gradually squeezed out by an encroaching bourgeois order until, ragged, bleary-eyed, and (sometimes) hungover, her disreputables scavenge for leftover freedoms in the margins of the domesticated nation.

For both Stockley and Page then, bourgeois domesticity is a crucial determining factor in the definition of a patriotic identity. The next chapter focuses more narrowly on their very different representations of the feminine sphere, in the context of the Rhodesian identities which emerge in their fiction.

¹ For instance, "Madame Fashion" shares Stockley's suspicions of women's friendship. In *Virginia of the Rhodesians*, Mrs. Ffollett and Mrs. Blundell feign deep friendship. However, when the one's back is turned, the other shares libellous comments about her "dearest friend" for anyone in hearing to pick up (23,1-4). In similar vein, "Madame Fashion" comments scathingly about the young women of Natal: "Another amiable characteristic of our "society girl" is the delightful way in which she will slander her "dearest friend," and that to the verge of criminal libel, for the edification of her partner for the time being, forgetting that he is likely to hear much the same story of herself from the same "dearest friend" a little later (20 Nov).

Certain stylistic features are also similar. For instance, Madame Fashion uses the phrase "Padding our own canoe", which is the subject of a joke in *Virginia of the Rhodesians* (202).

² The maternal metaphor for national identity is also ironised by Page in "Where the Strange Roads Go Down". The heroine, Joe Lathom, mocks the commercial interests of the Chartered Company, "this sentimental, affectionate Company of ours", "mothering its brave pioneer settlers" (39) in an implicit comparison between the Company's self-interest and the maternal ideal of identification and nurturance embodied in the metaphor of the nation as mother

³ The British system of male primogeniture meant that the first son inherited the ancestral estate and title. The second, and subsequent sons, of the upper classes, while of impeccable class origins could thus be without land in England. Page's phrase "second son's country" arrogantly bequeathes Rhodesia to these descendants of the upper classes.

⁴ Page's epigraph is taken from Kipling's poem "The Song of the Dead" (Rudyard Kipling's Verse 172).

Chapter Six:

Negotiating Imperial Domesticity, Heroic Masculinity and Feminism

It is notable that neither Cynthia Stockley nor Gertrude Page customarily uses the discourses of victimised British femininity which Sharpe finds central to the expression of British patriotism in colonial India. In contrast, Stockley and Page are not particularly attracted either to heroic feminine martyrdom, to the discourse of rape, or to the discourse of “black peril” as expressions of feminine patriotism. Discourses of colonial motherhood (perhaps because of their greater potential for asserting a specifically feminine patriotic subjectivity) play a central role in the later work of both authors.

As I have pointed out in the discussion of eugenics in chapter 1, Michel Foucault’s theory of “biopower” can be used to explain “the links between racism, sexuality and class” which characterise the anxieties about British imperial masculinity at the turn of the century (Young “Foucault on Race” 63). A central process in the deployment of this “biopower” is the historical process of “hysterization”, whereby the meaning of the bourgeois woman came to be defined primarily in terms of her role in ensuring the health of the race. According to Foucault, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the bourgeois woman’s body and subjectivity were hysterized, or defined in terms of the womb-function and her existence was subject to her role as reproducer of the race (146).

A manifestation of this process can be seen in the “hysterization” of women in popular culture after the First World War. Mitchell shows that, around the time of the First World War, a process occurred which she termed “the regendering of girls”, by which girls were returned to the broadly domestic and maternal definition of femininity. For Mitchell, this “clearly marks the end of their period of equality” (Mitchell 187).

(From the discussion of femininity in chapter 2, it should be clear that this “equality”, as made possible by the androgynous discourses of the turn of the century was itself a gendered ideal – androgyny is certainly not an escape from gender.)

While bourgeois femininity was defined in relation to masculinity, as is apparent from the above example, it was also defined in relation to other important categories, such as race and class. As Ann Stoler points out, the overall development of biopower (which includes hysterization) cannot be separated from the development of Europe’s imperial project. As a result, hysterization “made child-rearing an imperial and class duty, and cast white women as the bearers of a more racist imperial order and the custodians of their desire-driven, immoral men” (35). The resultant notion of imperial bourgeois femininity and feminine sexuality, was, however, not a stable notion. Like bourgeois identity generally, the definition of bourgeois femininity relied on various definitional others against which it came into being (as pointed out in chapter 4, these included the “immoral European working class”, the “native Other”, the “destitute whites” and the “ambiguous population of mixed-blood origin” [Stoler 100]).

In the colonial romance, hysterization is also a term one might use to describe the heroine's movement from masculine individuation to the generalised state of wife/mother, which brings the narrative to a close. The contest between individuation and hysterization in the plots give us important clues to prevailing anxieties about the inclusion or exclusion of certain qualities within the bourgeois domestic realm. The particular qualities attributed to the heroines, then, played an important role in establishing norms for a Rhodesian version of imperial femininity, and the texts, particularly those of Page (which occasionally aspire to realism), should be read, not as realistic representations, but as variants of the conduct manual, as described by Stoler, in the Dutch colonial context: “prescriptive texts of how a burgerlijk colonial

life style was supposed to look, not a posteriori affirmations or distillations of what colonial ventures had secured and already become" (106). Stockley's texts follow the pattern of the sensation novel, which both fantasised the remaking of lower, or lower-middle class women, as "genteel woman" and expressed the anxieties which attend such boundary-shifting transformations (Pykett 85). In Stockley's case these anxieties are intensified by her bridging of colonial "racial" and metropolitan social distinctions

Hysterization can also be viewed from another perspective, however. Given the important role played by the womb in hysterisation, it becomes that which controls the destiny of the race. This feminist inversion of eugenics inspires much of the argument of Olive Schreiner's feminist classic Woman and Labour, and is particularly clear in the following quotation:

The great, central fact, that with each generation the entire race passes through the body of its womanhood as through a mould, reappearing with the indelible marks of that mould upon it. That as the os cervix of woman, through which the head of the human infant passes at birth, forms a ring, determining for ever the size at birth of the human head, a size which could only increase if in the course of ages the os cervix of woman should itself slowly expand, so exactly the intellectual capacity, the physical vigour and the emotional depth of woman form also an untranscendable circle, circumscribing with each successive generation the limits of the expansion of the human race (57).

In Schreiner's revision, the eugenic power of the "womb" to facilitate or restrict the development of the race is extended analogically to suggest women's intellectual, physical and emotional role in the development and "progress" of the race.

In this reversal of conventional eugenic gender hierarchies, Schreiner's reading of hysterisation empowers the category "woman". Both Stockley and Page characteristically appropriate the discourses of colonial nationalism, which were discussed in chapters 4 and 5, in their stories about white women. Schreiner's appropriation of eugenicist discourse is steered towards determinedly feminist ends. In

contrast, however, Page's appropriation results in a trade-off between natalism and feminism. This trade-off is resolved by producing a natalism which expands the definition of "mothering" from the private sphere into the public sphere, and which allows an (admittedly limited) empowerment of the category of middle-class British women through domesticity and the codes of the bourgeois romance, and through control over the reproduction of the boundaries of the nation. As might be expected, Page does not go as far as adopting Schreiner's revisioned eugenicism, which demands "Give us labour and the training which fits us for labour! We demand this, not for ourselves alone, but for the human race!" (11). The limits of what I have rather loosely termed "empowerment" are visible in Page's final novel, where the heroine runs the family farm after the death of her husband, so that her young son may one day take over. However, she can do so only by receiving spiritualistically conveyed instructions from her dead husband, and her mode of running the quintessential Rhodesian ranch differs in no way from his. This somewhat anxious redefinition of bourgeois femininity in the colonial setting confronts the fear that the new, more virile domesticity of the colonial farmer's wife might, in some way, exclude the heroine from the circle of respectably bourgeois British femininity.

Stockley's case is more complex, however. In certain respects, she weights the scales against the bourgeois woman. Her earliest fiction (despite being set in the "heroic" decade of Rhodesian history) focuses almost exclusively on the domestic realm, although largely in order to attack the values of domesticity and sentiment, and to disempower the bourgeois woman. Her more sensational fictions empower her heroines, and further trouble the placid domestic ideal, by transferring to the heroines the signifiers of the racialised and sexually exotic and powerful "other" woman. Later in her career, Stockley became less completely antagonistic to bourgeois femininity (in that her

heroines become less sexually unconventional), and more attracted to depictions of the heroic realm of colonial warfare and to the masculine space of the Rhodesian pioneer. The first tendency is discussed in detail in chapter 7, while the second tendency, whereby Stockley defines Rhodesian identity in terms of heroic masculinity and away from the bourgeois models preferred by Page, forms the subject of the final section of this chapter.

Gertrude Page: Negotiating Natalism and Feminism

Defining the Ideal Colonial Woman

A fundamental contradiction in Page's fiction is her romantic sense of Rhodesia's freedom from the social conventions and the urban existence of Britain, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the claustrophobia experienced in Rhodesia by many women settlers. As Kirkwood points out:

The physical space in Rhodesia is wide and relatively unconfined; for women, the social space proved very limited. For many women the "wide open spaces" seemed a void rather than enlargement of freedom (155).

That white women who lived on Rhodesian farms and mines in the first two decades of the century felt desperately isolated is attested to by the recurrent themes of loneliness and isolation in Madeline Heald's collection of settler women's reminiscences: "[she] did not see another white woman for two years" (253); "For one whole year I never went into Bulawayo. I was a miner, housekeeper, wife and mother, and they were strenuous years" (190); "Between 1910 and 1921, my mother had five children and only the last one was delivered by a doctor" (1).

While Page's first novels highlight this unresolved contradiction between freedom and claustrophobia, her later novels attempt resolutions which favour women's immigration to Rhodesia. Britain itself has now become claustrophobic for women, Page argues, because of the "surplus" women in that country, and the necessity for women to

enter into paid employment. Page's ideal feminine Rhodesian settler brings with her the British woman's domestic power into the country, in order to transform the nature of society in Rhodesia. She does not only import her reproductive capacity, but other domestic qualities such as "sympathy" and "purity" which extend her powers beyond the domestic sphere into the public sphere, influencing the nature and government of the nation itself. On the other hand, the Rhodesian context also encourages in Page's feminine immigrants the development of a certain virility, which redefines the domestic sphere to include the productive power of the farmer's wife. A crucial component of her idea of Rhodesian women's virility is their ability to command black men. As has been pointed out, Page's free and empowered white woman in the colonies are invulnerable to black men. By disallowing the "black peril" discourse in her novels, and showing the power of her heroines over black male servants, Page empowers her virile British women. This is a peculiar variant of the way in which representations of the military prowess and physical vigour of their defeated Zulu and Ndebele enemies enhanced British masculinity.

Empowering Motherhood

As pointed out in the previous chapter, The Edge O' Beyond is not unequivocal in espousing the emigration of upper-class British women to the colonies, despite being dedicated to "all the women in the COLONIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO ARE ROUGHING IT FOR THE SAKE OF HUSBANDS FATHERS BROTHERS AND THEIR COUNTRY". In Love in the Wilderness, the difficulties of women's emigration to such a country is also brought home to the reader in no uncertain terms.

In The Silent Rancher, Page's hero, Ranger Metcalfe, feels that he cannot ask a "delicately-nurtured Englishwoman" (290) to marry him and settle in Rhodesia since:

The English girl does not naturalise very well. She suffers terribly from homesickness and the absence of companionship, and generally ends by spending a great deal of time in England. She gets fever, and depression follows, and there is practically no relief. When she badly needs a change of air and scene for a little while she cannot get it....The perfectly natural result is that she very often gets hopelessly bored, with everything, her husband included (145).

This incompatibility of the middle- and upper- class English woman with the Rhodesian setting creates certain problems for Page's natalist view of the role of British women in Rhodesia. In The Edge O' Beyond this incompatibility means that it is impossible for Dinah or Joyce to settle in Rhodesia. However, as the settlement and domestication of Rhodesia becomes more and more important to Page, she finds ways to allow her well-bred heroines to find a life of monotony on an isolated farm more appealing than either Dinah, Joyce or Enid did. In The Silent Rancher, Page overcomes her difficulties, and Ranger Metcalfe is eventually married to the English heroine, Evelyn Harcourt.

In this novel, Page begins to highlight a belief in the "surplus" or "redundant" women of England, which, as Dorothy Driver has pointed out, was a common justification for encouraging the emigration of women. According to this belief, which drew on figures from successive censuses without adequate analysis, there were in Britain "over a million surplus women who were denied marriage or, should it become necessary, employment" (5). According to Cecillie Swaisland,

Belief in the "nightmare" continued and inspired much philanthropic activity for women, including the energetic espousal of emigration as a solution. The women emigrationists frequently repeated the figure of a million surplus or redundant women (6).

In The Silent Rancher, this "nightmare" belief lies behind the Administrator's explanation of the heroine's decision to marry the universally despised Sir Henry Mahon and come to Rhodesia:

men in England are very scarce just now, and K.C.B.'s still scarcer; and poor clergymen's daughters, even good-looking and well-connected, are very plentiful (35- 46).

Increasingly, Page's solution to the "solitary, starved, changeless monotony" of a British woman's life in Rhodesia is the magical power of romance (254). The only way in which a life in Rhodesia can be made fulfilling for Page's intelligent woman is the inspiration and sense of power provided by a passionate, lasting romance. For Page, the "great essential" for a successful colonial marriage is the "quality of the love between husband and wife, and the character of the man" (256). This vision of the power of romantic love guarantees the success of the match between Metcalfe and Evelyn:

For knowing and feeling all that he knew and felt about the unsuitability of a lonely ranch as a home for a delicately-nurtured Englishwoman, she yet knew that when the love was of the right quality, all things could bend to and be dominated by it, and a true and deep happiness be won through mutual help.(209)

From the start of the novel, Page's representation of Evelyn's eugenic maternal destiny shows her as bourgeois domestic woman giving birth to the nation – she is described as a "fresh, frank, generous-hearted English girl, the typical mother of the men who have made England great" (62). Indeed, Evelyn's destiny is to export these exemplary maternal talents for the benefit of Rhodesia and Empire. Page shows Evelyn well-suited to her calling as a colonist in her "directness" of gaze, which penetrates "to the horizon", and reveals a heart "ready to do and dare all things, for the sake of her own lofty ideals" (60). A politician fantasises about Evelyn's breeding potential as a mother of the nation: "what [Rhodesia] badly needs is a few strong, calm women such as you, to give her strong, calm sons to rule the future" (222), and Evelyn imagines for herself a maternal destiny which is not purely reproductive and which spreads beyond the confines of her own family. She imagines that one day, as wife of the administrator of Northeastern Rhodesia, she will hold court at Government House:

I have a sort of motherly feeling already for all the lonely men. I should like them to feel they could always find sympathy and friendship at Government House if they wanted it. I should like to feel that being able to do so kept some of them better men than they might, perhaps, have been, if there were no such homely meeting place (82-3).

Thus, along with her reproductive capacity, Page's "motherly" heroine exports the values of "sympathy" and "purity" (86) to a colonial setting beleaguered by various evils and degenerative forces. Significantly, the passage transforms "Government House" into a home – not only for the governor, but for all the men of the colony. The difference between "house" and "home" is the presence and values of the domestic woman. Symbolically, Evelyn's intervention will shift imperial "government" in the notoriously "impure" Northeastern Rhodesia from its dominantly heroic nature to a bourgeois model, where the values of the domestic woman reign supreme. This becomes particularly clear in the novel's treatment of inter-racial sex, which I discuss later in this chapter.

The origins of Evelyn Harcourt's maternal capacity are quintessentially British. However, a good deal of the attraction of colonial motherhood for Page is the possibility of the African setting encouraging a more "virile" womanhood than that possible in England. She celebrates the capacity of "the young, primitive lands ... [where] a woman [is great] for her free, unfettered courage and the strong womanliness of the early mothers of a great race" (296). As pointed out in chapter 3, Page's increasingly tomboyish heroines are persuaded to marry with their boyishness being transformed into the strength and power of Page's later mother figures.

By 1910, Page was writing what has been termed "thinly veiled propaganda to attract settlers" (163), especially women settlers. The "Writer-woman" of Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy provides an interestingly self-conscious moment. She is presented as an exemplary mother and wife, who nonetheless converts writing and political agency

into extensions of the maternal role. This is a crucial moment in Page's redefinition of bourgeois colonial domesticity away from the domestic "drudge" (such as Marian in The Edge O'Beyond).

The narrator, Jill, a neophyte farmer's wife, sees Writer-woman as an ideal female colonist, since, she is not the low-class "Hausfrau" type of settler, but rather a writer and mother, and "sportsman Englishwoman", who, because of her breeding, intelligence and virility, makes an ideal colonial woman. Her sphere of influence is not restricted to the "home" but extends to the whole colonial realm:

It was the very thing I'd come from England to see. Not the Hausfrau, who will settle anywhere, given a husband and children, and a house to worry in; but a sportsman Englishwoman, who could shine in any assembly at home, and yet gave herself to the colonies, so to speak (73).

This writer/mother-figure epitomises Page's ideal of the feminine patriot, who is fertile both physically and verbally in the service of empire and nation. She seems to be a partial self-portrait of Page, and might be articulating Page's own priorities when she comments: "As a matter of fact, I'm not a writer first of all, I'm a Rhodesian, and I love my country. And I want to make other women love it if I can" (130). Significantly, the writer names her daughter "Rhodesia" and the narrator muses: "it is as if she had two babies named Rhodesia, one a child and one a country, and she gives the best of herself to both". Here the writer gives birth to Rhodesia – a particularly significant moment. Inspired by the "writer-woman", the narrator wonders why, at the local agricultural show "there is as yet no prize for babies" (106). In contrast to the sympathy shown in Edge O'Beyond because Joyce's husband treats her as if she were "only part of the stock" on his farm (221), Page's growing patriotism towards Rhodesia allows her narrator to expound natalist strategies for expanding and improving the race in Rhodesia which effectively moves (white) baby-making into the masculine sphere of agricultural production and competition:

I would give a prize for the finest baby, and the cleverest baby, and the goodest baby; and I would give the biggest prize of the whole concern to the mother who had the biggest Rhodesian-grown family. For a sure thing what Rhodesia wants more than anything just now is babies, babies, babies (106-7).

In line with this approach, the “writer-woman” advocates dealing with Britain's “surplus women” in a way which would also improve the Rhodesian “stock”:

she wants to bring white women out in shiploads, mostly chosen from the average well-educated “good sort” English girl, of whom there are such a superfluous number at home.(177).

As a gesture of conciliation to the overtaxed white women of Rhodesia, the Writer-woman plans a “Sanatorium” which would function as a form of holiday farm for white woman – “a little change of air and a rest from household worries” (179).

Jill, as the neophyte to Rhodesia, is used as an example of a woman's successful initiation, through the trials, difficulties and boredom of farm life, into her destiny as a Rhodesian mother. Despite her difficulties, she reflects that her life as a farmer's wife in Rhodesia is certainly preferable to the alternative – being a working single woman in Britain. Thus for Page, women's emigration allows women to influence the public sphere, while escaping what she sees as the boredom, and possibly unacceptable class connotations of formal employment. For Jill, learning about farming in Rhodesia “will prove far pleasanter than learning the intricacies of type-writing, or nursery-governessing, or post-office clerking, which might have been my lot unhusbanded” (184).

This section has demonstrated that, while Page does not usually send her heroines out to work, she most conclusively desires that their realm of influence should extend into the public sphere. This is clearly illustrated in several of her later novels, such as Follow After!, The Pathway, and The Rhodesian, where she marries her tomboys to politicians. In The Rhodesian, this marriage is of obvious political significance in taming the “rabid” Van Hert (discussed in the last section of this chapter). In other

novels, such as The Silent Rancher, and Jill on a Ranch, it is predicted that the heroine's son will become a colonial administrator or a politician. In all these novels, the heroine's marriage to or mothering of a (potentially) politically powerful man suggests a desire that the British woman's bourgeois values and influence should extend beyond the confines of the narrow domestic sphere.

Black Men

Page does not exhibit any paranoia about the sexual threat of the black man. Even in the rare moments where she plays on British fears about the black rapist, she embroiders the scene with lavish markers of the British woman's patriotic subjectivity. In Follow After!, the pressures of war activate the "discourse of rape" mentioned in chapter 4. In the novel, white women are helping to defend a British fort at Karonga, which is embattled by "the black soldiers under the German troops", who were "a savage, cruel, barbarous lot" (who are contrasted to loyal black soldiers such as the "Engleeshman", *Twilight*). Recognising that, were Karonga to fall, the fate of the white men would be "murder" and that of the white women "more terrible still" (63-64), the white women plan to defend their honour by suicide: "Rather would they die by their own hand to escape the nameless horrors" (64). Page adds a characteristically emphatic note to this assertion of British feminine patriotism, by having two women planning to end their lives while clutching a fragment of the Union Jack: "we shall stand close together, both holding on to this piece of our dear flag, and if we do our work properly we shall fall still holding it in our hands" (70). This final patriotic gesture links these women with "all the British soldiers fighting in Europe. We can be proud that the chance has come" (70).

Thus Page avoids depicting passive, plundered, or martyred British femininity. Chennells finds that this is a general characteristic of Rhodesian women's writing – "[al]though settler mobs may have made the inviolability of their women a sacred trust

or pretended to, the women novelists scorn so passive a role in the building of a new country" (415-6).

In fact, Page's presentation of white women more generally relies on a crucial refusal of the possibility that a white woman could be vulnerable to a black man. The "black peril" discourse reduces black men to a basic, savage sexuality, while it positions white women as the victimised objects of this desire. Page avoids this discourse, and generally relegates black men to the margins of her novels, using a discourse which labels them "boys" and thus effectively infantilises them.

One specific manifestation of this general tendency, however, reveals the crucial role of the black male domestic worker in Page's redefinition of Rhodesian domestic space. In *Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy*, the protagonist, Jill, arriving in Rhodesia from England, is terrified of the black male cook who will be working for her. Her first impression is that he is physically huge, overpowering, and threatening – he wields a kitchen knife. She notes in her diary: "Don't like the appearance of him at all" and, nervously, "Don't think he quite likes the look of me" (22). However, the narrative gradually shows Jill learning that this perceived threat is not real, and soon her initial fear becomes frustration at the difficulties of her managerial role – her major occupation as housewife seems to be "[c]oping with natives" (68). By the end of the narrative, she has "come to appreciate Rhodesian natives": she has learned to find them "comical" rather than frightening; she discovers that they are far more easily exploited than English servants ("In the matter of housing and feeding, for instance, they are positive treasures"); and, she claims, their utter "devotion and courage" makes them the loyal servants of their white masters (230, 48, 155, 174).

In one of the few cases where the notion of a "black peril" is referred to at all, it is ridiculed. On this occasion, Joe Lathom of *Where the Strange Roads Go Down* is

confronted by the shocked query from a British woman: "I hope you don't allow a black man ever to go into your bedroom?" (124). Joe replies that "One of them brings us tea when we are in bed every morning", to which the British woman can only respond "But how very indelicate" (124). Joe's retort is "We haven't much time to worry about delicate and indelicate in Rhodesia" (124).

The image of the white woman travelling alone through Africa, commanding large numbers of black men, is Page's most extreme expression of the invulnerable white woman. Nurse Grey of Follow After!, like the white man, acquires heroic status through her seamless, unthreatened power over a feared "other":

[She] trekked down from Fort Jameson to her brother's ranch near Chooka with sixty carriers, without showing or feeling the slightest nervousness whatever. This may have been partly owing to her wide understanding of the native, who is often a most faithful and thoughtful attendant to those whom he takes to, and who he knows understand him.

The secret of Nurse Grey's success is her "remarkable" understanding of the dialect spoken by her carriers, which renders them transparent and appropriately subservient to her:

She had acquired a remarkable grasp of the northern dialect, and when the boys chattered round their camp fires at night she knew all that that they were saying, and all that they sang as they trekked along in the daytime. And because of this they felt a kinship in her that was very gratifying to them, and showed a real delight in serving her. (161-2)

In Jill on a Ranch, Jill recounts the story of a man who wrote to his mother: "I love everything about Rhodesia – except the white ants and the white women" (131). She counters this misogynist perspective (which suggests the stereotype of the British woman as imperial party pooper) with the following story which establishes the British woman's heroic status, her command over black men, and counters misogyny with an opposite stereotype (common in "new woman" fiction) of the dangerously degenerate (white) male:

I may relate how a white woman friend of mine travelled three hundred miles in Central Africa with another white woman and one hundred and fifty native carriers – no white man at all. When asked later if she had not been nervous, unprotected among so many natives, she remarked: I have never found the black boy in Africa so dangerous and tiresome as the white man in other countries (131).

Redefining domesticity

In "Where the Strange Roads Go Down", Page's notion of a specifically Rhodesian national identity allows her to redefine domesticity and femininity, while mocking narrower, conventionally bourgeois notions of the domestic woman's role. In this novel, Page's narrative derides the clichéd imperialist sentiments of an English woman (in tones highly reminiscent of some of Page's own expressions of imperial loyalty):

"Only to think of the splendid Empire work you intrepid women carry forward in the colonies, while we butterflies flitter uselessly from flower to flower in gorgeous array" (44).

In contrast to this high-flown rhetoric, Page's heroine, Joe Lathom, responds to the gushing woman bluntly: "I'm no Empire-building heroine at all. I don't even bother to see if the saucepans are clean" (45). Page's novels, such as Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy, commonly depict the domestic difficulties experienced by her heroines when fresh from England and unused to Rhodesian conditions. Page's tomboyish heroines, who know little about the practicalities of running a home because of their upper-class background, are toughened to withstand the demands of colonial life, and allow her to redefine domesticity away from a narrowly decorative bourgeois femininity towards the untidy domestic productiveness of the farmer's wife.

However, Page must make sure that her redefined domestic woman is not read as the equivalent to the colonial slattern or slut. In the exchange about "empire-building heroines" discussed above, Joe allows a glimpse of more serious transgressions of the imperial ideal. She describes some of the women of her acquaintance who are markedly deviant:

You ought to come out there and see the heroines in their native haunts. They are much more interesting close at hand. There was one lived near me once, and if you were disposed to be neighbourly and go to see her, it was wise to give her twenty-four hours' notice, so that you found her sober. And I remember one freakish heroine, who came to call upon me riding astride on a mule, in a very flimsy, fly-away muslin dress. And there was the middle-aged one, who advertised for the post of housekeeper to a single young man on a farm. She caught him all right. It only took her two months.(47)

This demythologising gesture is intended humorously, but points out common fears about how colonial life itself could influence British women to “degenerate”, and become lacking in the bourgeois domestic qualities of sobriety, modesty and romantic sentiment.

Jill on a Ranch, Page's last novel, is the sequel to Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy. In this novel, Rhodesian domesticity has become clearly distinct from English domesticity. A great deal of the novel concerns Jill's experiences when she employs Mary, an English servant, to help her run her Rhodesian household. The narrative focuses on Mary's shocked responses to the domestic peculiarities of Rhodesian life. In contrast to Mary, Jill is a competent farmer's wife. Her different identity is symbolised by her adoption of a masculine style of dress. She wears a “knickerbocker suit”, which she renders acceptable by terming it “the land-girl's dress” (144-145). She is the girl on the land, and her new attire, she feels, allows her to escape from traditional definitions of femininity:

An uplifting sense of having broken away from ancient-received-opinions, from the old ignominious chatteldom to the male sex, from antiquated law-giving ... and from the possession of a mind that must only explore along explicit channels and be biased always by some mind that went before it (144).

In addition, her new dress allows her to express a new identity:

“a mind in tune to the wide spaces, fearless to explore all channels open, and avaricious to drink deep of the cup of life, whether it hurts or not” (145).

At the end of the novel, Jill's husband, Chip, dies, and Jill takes over the responsibility for running the ranch. As mentioned earlier, this moment demonstrates the limitations of Page's feminism. In running the ranch, Jill is merely acting as a proxy for

Chip. In the first place, she dutifully receives instructions from him (which he conveys to her spiritualistically, from beyond the grave) and runs the farm exactly as he dictates.

Secondly, she is running the farm to keep it in good order until her son is old enough to inherit his patrimony and join her in the task. Despite these limitations, however, Jill enjoys magical power over the black workers on the farm:

I have the most amazing influence over the boys. They are never troublesome with me, and I cannot choose but be fond of them. They are like faithful dogs waiting upon my lightest sign (223).

Jill's ability, as virile (and, importantly, bourgeois) Rhodesian woman, to command her colonial environment establishes a clear contrast with Mary's bewilderment. Despite having adjusted to life on the ranch, Mary will never master it – her version of domesticity does not extend beyond the private sphere:

she tries to help with the ranch, but is not a very great success, as she has a rare faculty for getting lost. If she goes out of sight of the homestead, she seems to turn round three times and lose herself (231).

The final passages of this, Page's last novel, present a scene which is a telling reflection on the author's fictional project as a whole. Jill, the virile "new woman" and capable Rhodesian farmer, ends her letter to turn to her managerial duties on the ranch: "it is now the time to mark the boys' tickets" (231). In this way, Page's colonial version of British feminism was unable to imagine white women's empowerment without the concomitant subjugation of blacks.

Trading Domesticity, Productivity and Motherhood for Romance

Those nations which have been the most reproductive have, on the whole, been the ruling nations...if child-bearing women must be intellectually handicapped then the penalty to be paid for race-predominance is the subjection of women. (Pearson qtd. in Klug 21)

This quotation (from a lecture given in 1885 by the Victorian eugenicist, Karl Pearson) explores the possibility that women's subjection in the role of motherhood is the

precondition for “race predominance”. Pearson hypothesises that the liberty of women is sacrificed in the quest for racial or national supremacy. In contrast, for Schreiner, women’s liberty to enter non-domestic fields of activity is the necessary precondition for racial development. Many of Page’s romances are fantasies of nationalism and natalism which attempt to promote the interests of the nation, and to promote what they perceive to be the interests of white women at the same time. Where white women’s satisfaction is missing, the romances show the success of the imperial and national project in jeopardy.

I have pointed out above that “The Great Essential” in Page’s romantic model of the successful colonial marriage is the bond of “sympathy”, or nurturing romantic love between husband and wife, “life might be fair anywhere, given but the right companion” (The Edge O’ Beyond 129). The magic of romance is the “glue” which unites and reconciles the seemingly separate and opposite worlds of the bourgeois woman and the heroic man. I now go on to explore the way in which Page demonstrates that, where this romance is absent, the colonial project itself is jeopardised. An early example of this is the disastrous marriage between Joyce and Oswald Grant in The Edge O’ Beyond.

Grant’s dynastic ambitions combine his desire for a productive and ordered Rhodesian farm, with his desire for a family, and, especially, for a male heir. The overlap of these two forms of patriarchal status is made explicit in the following metaphor of Grant “sowing his seed”:

It was strange to think that when this wheat he was sowing was ready for reaping there would be a little new morsel of humanity up at the house. So he started off again, casting his seed in carefully modulated curves (16)

Up and down, up and down the long furrows ... he sowed his seed, and scattered with it dreams for his future.(54)

Unfortunately for Grant, the would-be patriarch, his unsympathetic attitude towards his wife, Joyce, eventually frustrates his attempt to found a dynasty. Grant's

attitude towards Joyce hardly differs from his attitude towards his livestock. Page has one of her characters reflect indignantly: "First he bought a farm, then some cattle, then a horse, then a wife!" (221).

Grant is sketched as a cruel and inconsiderate man, undeserving of the patriarchal status to which he aspires. He breaks a puppy's legs and, on other occasions, refuses medical assistance to both Joyce's pony and her baby. When her baby dies because of this neglect, Joyce decides to leave him, and flees back to England with the considerably more sympathetic British doctor, Cecil Lawson. It is clear from the story of Joyce and Oswald Grant that, for Page, Empire-building does not only require forcefulness, manliness and hard work from white men, but also sympathy and gentleness towards white women, if these women's co-operation in the colonial endeavour is to be guaranteed. For Page, women decide to join the imperial project if offered enough sympathy and love from their husbands.

At other moments, however, dissatisfied white women are seen to delight in the destruction of the material prosperity that symbolises the successful colony. Such moments occasionally verge on the anti-patriotic. In Love in the Wilderness, Page's heroine, Enid, feels trapped by the monotonous, isolated grind of life on her brother-in-law's colonial farm. Her brother-in-law decides to build a dam on his farm so that he can embark on a lucrative tobacco-farming venture. For Enid, this dam comes to symbolise the constraints of life in Rhodesia for women colonists ("The name of the dam is Rhodesia", she exclaims [132]) and she takes a secret pleasure when a river undermines its construction:

There had been considerable difficulty at first to stop the flow of water creeping through in tiny streams underneath, and secretly she had been pleased, in spite of the extra labour and worry for her brother-in-law (1907:127).

This is a repeated moment in the novels, where the heroine is not entirely identified with the aims of colonialism, because of the narrowly domestic and maternal definition of how a woman can be “useful” to colonialism. Enid, Page’s heroine, rails against women's colonial injunction to “duty” and “usefulness”:

“Duty! ... Duty! ...” she exclaimed impatiently. “I am beginning to think it is just like a dam. To make us useful it robs us of beauty – dams our natural tendencies, however innocent – and leaves us stagnant and still like this uninteresting pond” (1907:131).

In many of Page's novels, this injunction to be useful is eventually obeyed, but her heroines and often the narrator nevertheless demand that white women receive recognition for their usefulness to the colonial project:

I want recognition for the women who endure, and say nothing. When the Sons of the Empire are lauded to the skies, the Daughters of the Empire should be remembered also (1907:68).

Page develops a similar scene in Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy. The monotony of the narrator's life on a Rhodesian farm is again highlighted – her afternoons are spent “wondering what to do until tea-time” and her evenings “wondering what to do until bed-time” (66) while her husband works, smokes and sleeps. As a result, she is thoroughly disillusioned with the endeavour to make the farm productive, and wonders if other Rhodesian women also occasionally wish that “an earthquake would swallow up all the mealies and everything pertaining thereto” (182). Her boredom and disaffection, despite a concerted attempt to remain optimistic (through her “Rhodesian philosophy”), become so overwhelming that, when a “veldt fire” threatens the destruction of the farm, she identifies with the fire, rather than with her husband's predicament:

I have seen my first big veldt fire. It was splendid. I should like two a week. I dare not say so before the men, but I think it all the same. A veldt fire for them means a hurried rushing off to the scene of action, shouting to every available boy to follow; and then they all run - snatching at branches as they pass, to meet the on-coming fiend. This was a terrific fire; a wanton, revelling, pitiless sort of

fire, that dodged round kopjes, and jumped roads and streams like a live thing (93).

Cynthia Stockley: Recuperating Heroic Origins

Stockley's response to the natalist imperatives of colonial domesticity is rather more complicated, and rests on her antagonism to the limitations imposed on women, and the perversions of feminine power created by the imperatives of bourgeois domesticity. Her attraction to the heroic realm of pioneering masculinity can also be interpreted in this light, and gives rise to her particularly anti-bourgeois narrative of Rhodesian identity. As I have pointed out in my discussion of Ponjola in chapter 5, the excesses of pioneering masculinity do cause Stockley some alarm, her heroines conform to their domestic roles as ideal imperial women primarily in order to recuperate this masculinity.

Rejecting Domesticity

More generally, however, and in contrast to the pattern in Page's romances, Stockley's heroines seldom become entirely satisfactory ideal imperial women despite the fact that her romances also follow the familiar pattern of hysterization. Chapter 7 explores this tendency in detail, and this discussion is intended to provide a brief introduction to the anti-domestic theme in Stockley's work. Until the very last pages of Virginia of the Rhodesians, Virginia is entirely cynical about marriage, married women and babies. She shows a characteristically unsentimental approach to children:

I was inclined to sympathise with [Mrs Kat]. Babies are such bores – especially ugly six-month-old ones; and Mrs Kat's were particularly objectionable ... they were short and fat and bulgy: the sort of babies one wanted to put on to the bed of Procrustes and lengthen out. No wonder Mrs Kat went out and flirted till the town turned pale (1903:114).

Poppy is the story of an impoverished colonial orphan of Irish descent, who, despite her background and sexual transgressions, is brought to approximate the gentility of the ideal bourgeois woman of empire as Lady Carson, governor's wife in Borapota. This extravagant fantasy incorporates the non-bourgeois woman into the definition of

the bourgeois ideal. However, as befits the novel of sensation, the tensions between Poppy's imperial destiny and her distinctly non-bourgeois background and character are given full play.

Poppy, after her sexual transgression, must confront the possibility of her exclusion from the imperial community. Since her feminine sexuality and fertility are not channelled by marriage into the service of the imperial ideal, she imagines that despite her exemplary imperial sentiments, she is an outcast. In Rudyard Kipling's poem "The Native Born", Westminster Abbey is the symbol which unifies all parts and subjects of the British empire, no matter how disparate: "the hush of our dread high-altar/ Where The Abbey makes us We" (Rudyard Kipling's Verse 192). Poppy, however, feels herself beyond the pale, because "squalid" and "shameful" in her pregnancy, when confronted with the "grand ideal" of the Abbey:

Yes [Westminster Abbey] stood for all high and noble things and thoughts! All grand ideal! Nothing squalid there, or shameful! Surely it belonged to her – belonged to everyone who loved it and loved what it meant. But did it? Was she cut off from it because – ? She drew in her breath, and thought for a long time with closed eyes and clasped hands (244).

Page's heroines, from fragile Enid, through tough Joe, to optimistic, coping Jill, are influenced by their African environment to approximate the "virile" womanhood Page believed was necessary for the continued predominance of the British empire. As Catherine Corder points out, a similar process can be discerned in other Southern African romance writers, such as Frances Bancroft, who wrote South African romances contemporaneously to Stockley and Page. One of Bancroft's heroines, Anne Ashe, is strengthened and prepared for her role as "a valued mother in the terms of imperialism" by her African upbringing and by a personified Mother Africa (Corder 94). In contrast, Stockley's sensationalised novel attributes to the influence of Mother Africa an

uncontrolled feminine sexuality which could potentially cut Poppy off from the imperial ideal. A tortured Poppy confides this to her friend, Clem:

I am a child of passionate Africa, Clem ... the blood in my veins runs as hot and red as the colour of a poppy...it is an awful thing to look into the eyes of a man you do not love and see passion staring there – and feel it urging in your own veins, too (360).

While the major trend in Stockley's fiction is anti-bourgeois and anti-domestic, many of Stockley's novels show the advent of the heroine effecting a magical transformation from the nightmare of colonial squalor to the bourgeois ideal of colonial productiveness. Stockley's heroines do not so much establish bourgeois domesticity for the heroes, as return potentially degenerative heroic masculinity to a purified boyishness and nobility.

In The Claw, Deirdre Saurin's transformation of Maurice from "degenerate" idle drunkard to model police officer is a case in point. Another example is Ponjola, where Desmond, through her love, rescues Lundi Druro from his self-destructive alcoholism and depression, and saves his farm and mine from ruin through hard work and quick thinking.

Stockley's anti-domestic discourses of femininity are discussed in more detail in the final chapter as, insofar as she is influenced by sensation fiction, her model of femininity demonstrates certain highly specific differences to that of Page.

Nostalgia for Origins

The heroic decade of the 1890s is often depicted in Stockley's fiction. She spent the years between 1895 and 1897 in Mashonaland, where she stayed in Umtali during the Shona Rising. Stockley's earliest fictionalisation of these years occurs in her first novel Virginia of the Rhodesians, which was written in 1901 and published in 1903. In this novel, she depicts the experiences of Umtali laager. She later revisits this first decade of settlement of Rhodesia in her novel The Claw, and again in a short story, "Common or Garden Earth".

A comparison between these three depictions reveals that military encounters with the Ndebele and Mashona take on an increasing importance to Stockley as time passes – while they are almost incidental to her first novel, they gradually come to generate a myth of white martyrdom and sacrifice in the cause of establishing Rhodesia. In Virginia, which focuses on the feminine sphere, Stockley’s major definitional “other” is the bourgeois domestic woman, defined in terms of a respectability which Stockley opposes. In the later, more patriotic text, The Claw, the domestic woman is ambivalently portrayed, and the definitional “others” of Rhodesian identity are the savage Ndebele and Lobengula. Later in Stockley’s fiction, the virulent impropriety of the villaininess takes over this role.

The mythological importance of the Risings in Stockley’s version of Rhodesian national origins is displayed in rudimentary form in Virginia of the Rhodesians, written soon after the events, and is only fully developed about ten years later in The Claw. It seems that Stockley’s need for a retrospective identification of a myth of origins grows as her sense of Rhodesian national identity solidifies with the passing years.

Additionally, as the texts increasingly engage with the masculine nationalist discourses of war, so do they increasingly stigmatise deviations from the imperial ideal of feminine domestic propriety.

Although her representation of the Risings in Virginia is very different to other settler depictions of the same events, Stockley does not, at any stage, question the legitimacy of the white occupation of Rhodesia, as, for instance, Olive Schreiner does, in her attack upon Rhodes in Trooper Peter Halkett of Mashonaland. Nor does Stockley devote any serious consideration to explaining the reasons for the Risings. Thus, although her novel does not draw substantially on the conventional colonial discourses of war which are deployed so abundantly in the texts of writers such as Selous and

Baden-Powell, this should not be read as a “feminine” subversion of the basic imperialist and racist assumptions of such writers. In the later works, as in several moments in Virginia, the conventional racial justifications for settlement and settler militarism are elaborated in detail.

The peculiarity of Virginia in comparison to the more conventional colonial discourses of war, and indeed, in comparison to Stockley’s later work is that, in Virginia, the Risings are surprisingly unproductive as a source of imperialist and racist discourse. However, silence also fulfils a function in maintaining the ideology of imperialism, and, as Armstrong points out, women writers, by their exclusion of political concerns from their domestic novels, in fact established an important tenet of bourgeois power. In Virginia, Stockley’s relative silence about the Risings helps to maintain the stability and continuity of a feminine sphere of romance and marriage for British women, despite what constituted a fundamental challenge to British rule in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. Stockley’s ideological position is not far removed from the general perspective of the settler community, and her brief narration of the events after the beginning of the Risings confirms certain settler myths about the Rising. In the first place, Stockley identifies the necessity for outside leadership of the Mashona by “Cape boys” (72). It was a common settler assumption that the Mashona were cowardly and backward in comparison to the Ndebele (Chennells 86); Stockley thus assumes that they would not rise unless some outside forces were involved. Another formulaic element of Stockley’s narration is her emphasis on “treachery” in her brief mention of the killing of a British woman and child outside Salisbury: “I sat appalled. One poor lady who with her husband and her little child had been treacherously done to death was well known to us all” (72). The only hint of possible reasons for the Rising can be found in a phrase

which describes the chief Makoni as “a native who had always resented British rule” (73).

Nonetheless, Virginia is important because it can be read to undermine the representations of Selous and others, who cite the barbaric invasion of the “innocence” of British domestic space as their rationale for warfare. Stockley’s foregrounding of the feminine zone as a constricted space, hazardous and iniquitous, is not compatible with Selous’s protection of an idealised feminine zone. Stockley’s rewriting of Rhodesia’s spaces of “innocence” is explored in more detail in the following chapter.

It should be remembered that the Risings shook settler confidence and seriously undermined many cherished settler beliefs. Ranger points out that, before the Risings “[i]t was the general rule of white conduct to behave as if they were in fact, invulnerable” (63). This sense of invulnerability intensified the panic which occurred when it was seen that the settlers were, in fact, far from invulnerable. Such panic and lack of preparedness was a source of shame after the Risings – Ranger quotes a Captain Macfarlane who comments sarcastically on the behaviour of the “gallant inhabitants” of Bulawayo: “It was a disgraceful scene and the less said about it the better” (qtd. in Ranger 129). Also, the Risings in fact decimated the settler population. It is reported that the number of settlers killed in the Risings was

something like ten per cent of [the settlers’] total number, a staggeringly high figure, infinitely greater than the proportion of casualties suffered by white colonists in the Algerian national rising, or the Mau Mau war in Kenya in the twentieth century (Gann quoted in Ranger 225).

In the face of this national catastrophe for the settlers, Stockley’s relative silence in Virginia seems to follow Captain Macfarlane’s injunction of “the less said, the better”. In this, Stockley allows settlers, and especially feminine settlers to once again don the cloak of invulnerability. In contrast to Selous’s masculine hysteria about the

violation of the British domestic sphere ("the women and children"), Stockley's attitude is one of comparative coolness.

Given this general ideological position, Stockley's representations of the Risings include some interestingly unconventional moments. In Virginia, she mocks the "Spartan wife" wartime image of British femininity, and depicts the feminine sphere in a context where the conventional controls of bourgeois domesticity are in a state of disarray. Thus, while the background to Virginia is indeed the 1896-7 Risings, these events are not central to the narrative but function in the plot as an opportunity for the heroine to escape the chaperonage of her sister-in-law, as an excuse for an the unusual opportunity for intimacy between the major characters in Umtali laager, and, in causing the death of one of the masculine characters, they reunite a mother with her illegitimate child. The atmosphere of danger and excitement created by having the Risings in the background is a central part of Stockley's notion of "Rhodesian life" - unconventional, adventurous and spiced with danger.

Once laager is established in Umtali, however, Virginia begins to emphasise the social opportunities afforded by the Rising: "quiet little Umtali began to assume quite a busy and festive air" (75), and to comment on the atmosphere of apprehension and expectation:

Life was very sweet and sunburnt and eventful in those days. there was just enough danger to make things exciting and not enough to make them uncomfortable, and always there was some bit of news, true or untrue, to stir the blood – some fresh rumour colouring the day grey or sunny (76).

As Chennells points out, this context of upheaval and disruption is integral to

Stockley's exploration of transgressive feminine sexuality:

"Sweet" is not normally a word settlers associate with native risings but it is used accurately in the context of the novel. Only if faced with imminent death can one appreciate what it is to live and only those who have experienced such moments will be able to recognize as arbitrary and absurd the conventional limitations placed on sexual freedom (179).

For the women in Virginia's clique, the time in Umtali laager is spent on the balcony of the hotel, behind the safety of barricades, where they "read and wrote, and gossiped through the long sunny morning hours, or watched the men parading in the square below", and from which they "could see everything that was going forward in the town" (76). Thus the women's confinement to laager is not presented as in any way inconvenient, as they are not cut off from the town, and they hold a commanding view of the surrounding scene. This confinement also affords Virginia the opportunity of discovering the sensational secrets of Mrs Karuth and Christine Carden, two of the women in laager with her.

Virginia's narration does emphasise a particular sense of danger among the women in laager, which is never explicitly articulated as a sexual threat: "the nights were made vivid – to we women, at least – by the thought that the natives might swoop down in the darkness and wipe Umtali and us off the face of the earth" (76-77). Stockley briefly builds this sense of an unnamed and elusive source of danger by describing "the beacon-fires, which, lit by our enemies, leaped and died mysteriously on the hills all round us" and which caused unease to the women since, "though women like to take chances as well as anybody, they like to know what chances they are taking" (76).

Later, however, Virginia voices a general sense of regret at the ending of "laager days": "we were all regretting every moment of the last six weeks, and wishing it were to come over again". When looking back to their experiences in Umtali laager on a later occasion, characters reminisce primarily about the scandals:

The story of Mrs Robinow's complexion was brilliantly related, and the real true version of the Harford Hipplesley engagement came out at last, together with the romance concerning Mrs. Ogle's hair-net and Mr. Wilson-Reynard's coat-buttons. (130).

A sombre note is introduced by one man's reminiscences of the heroes of the Shangani patrol – Alan Wilson, Captain Lundy and Harry Greenfield – but the pathos of this moment is not extended. This is rather surprising, given the fact that the events of this patrol had almost legendary status in Rhodesia (Ethel Tawse Jollie refers to it as “The saddest and most glorious incident in Rhodesian history” [21]), and, given the fact that Harry Greenfield was Stockley's brother-in-law. Thus Stockley is silent about not only the inglorious aspects of settler responses to the Risings, but also about the “glorious” moments of masculine heroism. Virginia's battles and confrontations with her most dreaded foes take place not outside the laager of settler femininity, but inside it.

Thus, despite some moments of conventionality, Virginia's narration departs from the hysterical pattern set by Selous. Notably, Virginia consciously mocks the classic postures of besieged British femininity. At the first rumours of a Rising, Virginia ridicules her sister-in-law, Clare, who wishes to remain loyally beside her husband:

“Clare immediately put on a Spartan-wife air and said that if there was going to be trouble her place was at Freddy's side. Freddy looked bored and I thought rather disappointed” (59). Virginia herself displays none of the appropriate reverence for the men who might have been depicted as the heroes of the moment by another writer, or by Stockley herself later in her career. First, she regrets Freke Frewin's escape from pursuers, as he is an importunate suitor of hers:

Freke Frewin, to whom I had said good-bye and several other final things in Salisbury, had come floundering in at the last moment with a detachment of Makoni's warriors hot on his heels. Sometimes I wished they'd caught him (77).

Other characters reproach Virginia for her callousness towards men, and blame her for the fact that Freke Frewin was later killed in the Risings. They comment sarcastically that Frewin, “as everybody knows”, joined the armed forces and “went away and got killed” because Virginia wouldn't marry him (123). The hero of the novel,

Gayer Waybrant, repeats this accusation at a later stage, and Virginia's responds to him with a continued lack of reverence:

That was rank injustice. How could I possibly have known that poor Freke was going to be killed? If I had I should certainly have promised to marry him that last night at the ball in Umtali (279).

Other women, who show more conventional emotions towards the British heroes, are occasionally ridiculed. Virginia comments sarcastically regarding Mrs Karuth, who is worried about her husband in Bulawayo: "Why do women eat out their eyes for men, I wonder? It makes such marks on the face" (87).

The experience of the Risings is a form of initiation ceremony into Rhodesian identity. Virginia declares:

For though "me fathers was Kings" and Ireland the land of my birth and upbringing, I am chiefly and above all things a Rhodesian. Mr Rhodes is mine own familiar friend, his quarrels my quarrels, and his country my country. In fact, I belong (235).

This initiation model of nationalism replaces the "ancient past" and long heritage so often emphasised in other forms of nationalism. Becoming a Rhodesian is thus, in Stockley's novel, not determined by the usual questions of birth or bloodline, but rather by a watershed experience of racial conflict which leads to a changed identity, and to the assumption of characteristically Rhodesian attitudes. A similar form of initiation into a Rhodesian identity exists in Page's novels, although in her case, this initiation takes the form of the hardships of farm life.

For Stockley, Rhodesian identity is constituted by, on the one hand, a freedom from conventionality (usually for men), and on the other, a replication of convention (usually for women). Stockley characteristically depicts the social claustrophobia of the feminine sphere with an absence of sentimentality usually shading into cynicism. One of the feminine characters comments that what attracts men to Rhodesia, and what always makes them long to return there is the "free life" and "Oh-let-things-rip' atmosphere"

(109). Such freedom from social constraints, is, however, not really possible in such a small settler community, especially for women, as the narrator notes with intense irony: “But that’s the charm of African life. People take such an acute interest in each other, and everybody knows everybody else – often by sight, always by reputation” (195).

Stockley’s ironic perspective on Rhodesia is particularly strong in this early novel: cynicism and boredom are, according to Virginia, attitudes which “one understands in Africa” (69). Virginia comments wryly that “Rhodesia is full of women who meant to love their husbands afterwards” (101). She is also rather denigrating about the characteristic superlatives with which the Rhodesian environment was characteristically praised – she mocks a character who employs these superlatives, even ironising the character’s use of an image of Rhodesia taking hold of the heart and never letting go:

[she] began to be “weird intense” about the blueness of the sky and the sunniness of the sun, and how Rhodesia had gripped her heart, and she was going to love the country and everyone in it (57).

Rhodesia’s “grip” on the hearts of all who visit there, the idea which is mocked lightly in Virginia, becomes a major theme of Stockley’s later novels. By 1911, when Stockley returns to the Risings in her novel The Claw, she is considerably less cynical about Rhodesia, and has adopted the ambivalent image of the “claw” (wielded, by turns, by a fascinatingly beautiful woman, or by a witch) in order to express the simultaneous danger, power and irresistible attraction of Rhodesia. This image, of the suffering enthralled colonist, is discussed in more detail in chapter 7. Ideologically, the trope can be placed in the context of first, the bourgeois model, where colonialism is the “white man’s burden” (the claw), and second, in the context of the heroic model, where colonialism is the white man’s quest for the object of desire (the fascinating woman). In this novel, Stockley is unusually enthusiastic about the bourgeois model, and chooses the following Kipling epigraph for the twelfth chapter:

Take up the White Man's burden
 And reap his old reward,
 The blame of those ye better,
 The hate of those ye guard.¹

The Claw shifts the “White Man’s burden” onto centre stage, and defines the “burden” as the colonist’s duty to participate in wars of colonial expansion, and to bear the sorrows consequent to these wars. The war in question was the Anglo-Ndebele War, fought in 1893. As mentioned in the introduction, Rhodes and Jameson “set out to manufacture a war for the seizure of Matabeleland” in order to raise the value of ailing Chartered Company shares by means of a “cheap confrontation”, motivating settler columns with promises of “land and mining claims yet to be won” (Phimister 9-10). Stockley’s novel includes a patriotic speech by a fictionalised Dr. Jameson, a description of life in laager at “Fort George” (probably Fort Victoria), various lengthy demonisations of Lobengula and the Ndebele including a description of the burning of Lobengula’s kraal at Bulawayo, and a detailed description of the events of the Shangani Patrol.

Stockley’s narrator, Deirdre Saurin, explains the “Government plan for invading Matabeleland” as a way of “putting an end to an impossible situation, and making the country a safe and clean one for a white race” (96). In Jameson’s speech, the interests of “Mr Rhodes”, “the British South Africa Company” and the “British Empire” are all equated with the subjugation of the Ndebele (98). Articulating a popular settler myth, Jameson also equates the subjugation of the Ndebele with “liberty” for the Mashona, “who as our servants for the first time in their lives knew the sweet taste of liberty that is the right of every man that breathes” (99). Britain, a force for freedom, is duty-bound to eliminate the tyranny and cruelty of Lobengula, the “bloody butcher” (99). When it is known that the Ndebele have been defeated, Deirdre comments that “civilisation had advanced another great stride in the subjugating of a savage and cruel nation” (141).

In Virginia, no details are given of the Shangani patrol, but this is a central incident in The Claw, where the death of “thirty-four of the finest fellows in the country” (151) buttresses the notion of the “white man’s burden” (138) by highlighting the sacrifices by which the British “paid” for Rhodesia. This canonisation forms a clear contrast to the events in Virginia, where the British men who die in the Risings are not a central focus of the novel, and are occasionally, as in the case of Freke Frewin, presented in a rather unheroic light.

While, in Virginia, the masculine theatre of war is practically invisible and Virginia mocks dutiful married women, in The Claw, the women’s world of gossip and romance is shifted off centre stage, and the discourses of war grow in resonance. In comparison to the small circle of upper-class British women in Virginia, Stockley’s focus expands slightly in The Claw, and becomes markedly more positive about bourgeois femininity, by including middle-class housewives as feminine citizens of her new Rhodesian nation. Stockley’s heroine, Deirdre, displays marked patriotic sentiments. As Chennells points out, these sentiments mingle conventional imperial rhetoric with a comparatively new notion of a unique Rhodesian identity in shared hardship (247).

Deirdre’s view of the Rhodesian nation reserves a central position for the ideal colonial domestic woman, “sensible, self-possessed women, prepared for any emergency” (116). These middle-class women, who prove their worth in the laager, embody the natalist ideal for the colonies:

As I listened to these gentle simple souls how I wished it had been to their set I belonged instead of to the set that looked over their heads and called them frumps and dowds. With their families of young children round them most of them had parted with a husband whom she might never see again. Yet here they were with cheerful faces making their plans and fixing up their children to take up as small amount of room and be as little nuisance as possible. I realised that it was indeed as Dr. Jameson had said, these were the real pioneers and patriots. These were the people Mr Rhodes needed for his new bit of Empire! (117).

However, the limitations of this democratic approach to settler nationalism are also apparent in Stockley's narrative. In her depiction of the "Fort George" laager, Stockley contrasts these middle-class British women both to the back-biting upper-class women who look down on them, and to Dutch women. The Dutch women are presented as entirely lacking in the "proper" domestic virtues which, according to Stockley, characterise the middle-class British women. Dutch women are "sullen", speak "coarsely", and pronounce their words in a "strangely raucous" way (112). Instead of employing domestic skills in order to transform the discomfort of the laager into a temporary home, the Dutch women leave their possessions in a "Dutch domestic heap" (118).

In this novel, the Dutch women's deviant domesticity reveals them as representatives of the "destitute whites in the colonies" who constitute one of the groups against which, in Stoler's model, bourgeois definitions of gender and sexuality were played out (100).

However, because Deirdre is in love with a man whom all believe to be married, she feels, directed against herself, the power of precisely these bourgeois definitions of the imagined community. Once again, as in the case of Poppy, transgressive feminine sexuality is excluded from the patriotic ideal. Deirdre's partially localised imperialist perspective is so well-developed that she even sympathises with the "Fort George women" when they ostracise her because of her romance with Anthony Kinsella, whom all believe to be married:

What right had I to hate them if, hearing that I was a traitor to their cause, they looked sideways at me? Naturally, if they believed it true that I loved a married man and gloried in it, they saw in me a conspirator against their own peace and happiness. What was to save their own husbands from my lures and wiles when they came back? (134).

However, the novel resolves the dilemma by revealing that Deirdre's transgression is perceived, rather than real, and thus her membership of the Rhodesian "imagined community" can, fantasmatically, be confirmed. The changes wrought by Deirdre's initiation into African life allow her to reflect on her newly acquired understanding of self-sacrifice:

[Africa] had opened eyes in my soul that had been blind before, and had shown me lives seared with pain and sin, and scorched with the fires of passion that were yet beautiful; of men who could fight down the beasts of temptation and conquer the devils of vice; of men who could forget self interest to hold out a helping hand to the weak and the stumbling; of men who could die in lone, silent places, so that others might live in safety and security; of women who could offer their all for the public good, and lose it with a smile on their lips (169).

Thus this novel establishes a place for white women's patriotism, by providing a revised version of domesticity – that of the laager, where women nurse wounded men after the war, and sacrifice their personal love and happiness to the military needs of the country.

The Risings become a prolific begetter of colonial discourse in Stockley's story "Common or Garden Earth". This story adheres closely to and repeats the motifs of conventional understandings of the Risings, and white violence and cruelty against blacks is viewed as a necessary punishment for and prophylactic against native "insolence" (115).

In the heroic romance (e.g. James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans) women's role in the narrative is to be protected from falling into the hands of the enemy. Narratives such as these probably influenced Baden-Powell's approval (discussed earlier) of the plucky British woman he encountered in the Matabele campaign who planned to commit suicide if captured by the enemy. Stockley's story extends this heroic pattern into a direction characteristic of the sensation novel – the woman must at all costs be protected from the enemy, even if this entails killing her. The fact that the woman herself, as adulteress, is not a particularly worthy specimen of British femininity, and is

incapable of understanding the full extent of her danger, heightens the chivalry of the hero who risks his life to protect her.

In the Salisbury laager, the settlers are horrified by the murders taking place around them. Their horror lies in their perception that this is not, by their definition, war – “decent open fighting” – but rather “secret savage murder of men and women in far places” (144). What sickens the settlers most, however, are the unmentionable outrages which accompany the murders:

Men bit their mouths close on revolting stories that it would do no good for the women to hear; and women came into laager night after night white-faced and sick of heart (1914:144).

Stockley describes the mode of administration used by Brebner, the “head of the native department and terror of every black face from Vryburg to Blantyre” (116).

Brebner’s habitual means of communicating with the “natives” is his riding whip, which receives the tacit approval of both the Administrator of the territory, and, implicitly, of

Stockley’s narrator:

Brebner’s mode of argument was the best, and only one properly appreciated by “our poor black brothers in South Africa”, as they were fancifully described at Exeter Hall (117).

At the start of the Rising, the hero, Maryon Hammond, single-handedly annihilates the leaders of an “advancing horde” of workers from his mine who have turned against him. He then disposes of the rest of the “murderous band” by hoisting them all down his mineshaft, cutting the ropes of the cage, and leaving them trapped:

“That’s all right”, said Hammond at last. “They’ve plenty of water, and a couple of days with empty stomachs will take the cheek out of them. At the end of that time, if all goes well, we’ll be here to let ‘em up again – if not, so much the worse for them” (134-135).

As it turns out, Hammond never returns to his mine, and the fate of his workers remains unspecified. Hammond then selflessly rescues his faithless and pregnant ex-wife, Cara, and her wounded second husband, De Rivas, by hiding them in the veld near

to their farmhouse and killing his beloved dog for food in order to sustain them for three days while he finds assistance. Hammond is barefoot and unarmed because he has left his revolver with de Rivas. The revolver contains only one cartridge:

the one cartridge for a certain emergency – the frightful emergency which all brave men who take charge of women in a savage country must be willing to face! But Cara whom this little incident chiefly concerned knew nothing of it (143).

In this depiction, the conventional opportunity for displaying feminine bravery and patriotic martyrdom is not utilised. Instead, the moment of threat to British womanhood allows men to take firm control. In a marked shift from figures such as Dorothy Kallander and Virginia, the transgressive woman here is a *femme fatale*, not because of her sexual powers, but because of the imperative that she be protected from harm. Naturally, this heightens Hammond's sacrifice and the tragedy of his eventual death.

In the final section of this chapter, I discuss the way in which the racial politics (between white and black, Boer and Briton) of Page's novels construct a "feminised" version of white colonial nationalism or a nationalism which works to entrench the powers and values of bourgeois British domesticity (Sharpe's "civilising mission") in the colonial enterprise. Stockley's novels are more ambivalent in this regard, identified as they are with the heroic values of colonial masculinity. This difference between the two novelists is especially apparent in the novels which deal with interracial sex and miscegenation. The sexual excesses of heroic masculinity often earned the disfavour of the representatives of feminine domesticity.

Controlling the boundaries of the nation

Both Page and Stockley write romances which attempt to construct a new South African nation from the contending forces of British imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism. In

Stockley's stories, this appears a tragically impossible task, mainly as a result of Boer irrationality and intransigence. In one short story, the British hero dies in the arms of the Boer heroine, killed in an explosion of dynamite laid by the heroine's father in order to sabotage the progress of a railway across his land ("Progress"). In The Leopard in the Bush, the violent passions of the Dutch heroine, Dalla, sabotage her marriage to the overly rigid and proper British hero, Valentia. Stockley's British representative in these "inter-racial" couples is usually masculine, and a personification of progress and reason, while her Boer women are generally dominated by primal emotions and passions. The only exception to this is the impeccably well-bred Carlie de Villiers, of Kraal Baby.

In one novel, The Rhodesian, Page's normally violently anti-Boer sentiments diminish slightly, allowing her to explore the construction of a new South African nationalism through the union of Boer and Briton in marriage. The British heroine, Diana, eventually marries William van Hert, who is introduced as a "rabid" Boer politician, with a "wild anti-British policy" (35). (As Chennells points out, this fanaticism consists of little beyond a preference for bilingualism.) However, under Diana's influence, his policies gradually show "a higher and broader tone", and his "hitherto rabid sectarianism" starts to show "an atmosphere of conciliation" (225). The reconciliatory tone which Diana brings to Van Hert's policies, and the union between the two characters, symbolize the reconciliation between Boer and Briton in South Africa, which argues Page's narrator, will ward off the threat to white Southern Africa by black numerical supremacy:

The older and wiser men were already beginning to shake their heads over the grave and difficult problem of the white races and the black; over the tremendous increase of the latter in comparison, which threatened to swamp the white man out of South Africa altogether. One thing was obvious to all thinkers, the white races must combine. Union must indeed be Union and not an empty name. The Englishman and the Dutch man must join hands and sink differences, not only for the common good, but for the common safety (342).

The novel's fantasised resolution to this problem establishes that the British woman is essential to the rescue of white Southern Africa, and fantasises her power over the Boer – another “definitional other”. Although Van Hert is depicted as dominant, passionate and obstinate – “strong, wilful, obstinate, fierce, virile” – Diana recognises him as a potential instrument of her desire: “he was a fine-toned, brilliant instrument that she, and perhaps she only, could play upon as she liked, bringing forth both thundering chords and enveloping sweetness” (308). The symbolism of British control and influence over the Dutch in the Union is obvious, and is combined with a fantasy of the domestic power of the British woman as a force influencing the nation. However, Page's deployment of alliance in this novel depicts not only the Boer-Briton reconciliation. The novel foregrounds another couple, Diana's sister, Meryl, and Carew, “the Rhodesian”. These two constitute the ideal British -Rhodesian pair. Page's marital map of the subcontinent thus charts an entirely British-controlled Rhodesia, while South Africa is an alliance between Boer and Briton, which, however, is controlled “behind the scenes” by British forces. The overall picture is, unsurprisingly, that of a British-dominated subcontinent. As pointed out in the previous chapter, this picture is a response to the perceived threat to Rhodesian autonomy by incorporation into the Union, an issue which Page addresses explicitly in her novel. At one point, Van Hert is attacked about his desire to incorporate Rhodesia into the Union:

In your United South Africa you want your people to be “top dog” always, and as long as Rhodesia stands out there's a menace to the north. That's one reason why you want her! (57).

Page's marriages stage the triumph of Englishness, thus ensuring a perpetuation of British hegemony in the forging of the new nations. The boundaries of the imagined community in South Africa is adjusted to include Afrikaners, in a move which, in fact, reinforces British imperialism and feminine domestic power. Additionally, the “pure”

British Rhodesia and the hybrid Boer-British Union are joined together by the ties of British sisterhood. It goes without saying that, underlying the new national identities is the exclusion of the black "other" from the new "imagined community" of Southern African nationhood.

A similar reinforcement of the power of the white British woman takes place in Page's mapping of the sexual boundaries between the white "nation" and its black "other". Dorothy Driver has pointed out the crucial role of white women in differentiating whiteness from blackness:

white women have been sharply differentiated from blacks and have, in fact, been used to maintain the difference between white and black. They must prevent the union of white men and black women, which would threaten the very categories on which imperialist discourse depended (14).

Such "unions" between white men and black women could indeed "threaten" the foundations of Colonial Discourse, and therefore the widespread imperial prohibition of such unions. However, in fiction, such absolute prohibitions are examples of a bourgeois, rather than a heroic model of colonial relations. In Haggard's King Solomon's Mines, Captain Good, as heroic British adventurer in Africa, may fall in love with the Kukuana woman, Foulata, although the narrative ensures that she dies before his return to civilisation. According to the bourgeois model, however, the morally superior coloniser, as bringer of civilisation, was expected to conform to and exemplify the domestic virtues and proprieties propagated for the patriarchal social order by the bourgeois woman.

Despite general public disapproval and protracted campaigns often led, significantly, by white Rhodesian women, Rhodesian law never in fact prevented white men from cohabiting with black women, although legislation was passed against sexual intercourse between black men and white women from as early as the second decade of

the settlement. Elizabeth Schmidt indicates that this racialised version of the sexual double standard originated in the early "pioneering" days of the settlement:

During the first two decades of colonisation, when settler society was composed primarily of hunters, adventurers, and mining prospectors, transgressions of the sexual color bar were generally tolerated. Disproportionately single and male, European settlers were less concerned with "keeping up standards" and "protecting white womanhood" than with meeting their own sexual, emotional, and housekeeping needs (175).

However, in 1903, in the midst of this "tolerant" atmosphere, the "Immorality

Suppression Ordinance" was enacted:

although it was assumed that no European woman would willingly have sexual relations with an African man, the Immorality Suppression Ordinance took precautions to account for the presumably exceptional case. The 1903 law, enacted before white women were enfranchised, rendered it a criminal offence for European women to cohabit with African men. A European woman found to have had sexual intercourse with an African man could be sentenced to two years' hard labor, while the man could be sentenced to five. Cohabitation between European men and African women was not prohibited (Schmidt 175).

Historically, this legislation was introduced because of the consternation caused after the Cape Colony Morality Act of 1902 sent many white prostitutes from Cape "vice rings" to other areas throughout Southern Africa, including Rhodesia (Jeater 88). The prostitutes who attracted particular condemnation were those who "accepted African clients", unlike other "decent" prostitutes who only accepted white clients. These transactions fueled "black peril" hysteria, as it was believed that sex across the colour bar would lead to a spate of attacks on white women (Jeater 88-89).

In 1916, a bill which would have "outlawed sexual intercourse between European men and African women" was defeated in the Rhodesian Legislative Council, despite a petition signed by 1800 white women (Schmidt 175). Rather than limiting the sexual freedom of white men, the legislature preferred to further hedge the sexualities of white women and black men:

the all-male, all-European legislature enacted the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Ordinance, which rendered it a criminal offence for white women to

make “indecent” suggestions to African men, and vice versa. Such suggestions on the part of white men to African women, however, were not criminalized (Schmidt 176).

Soon after the enfranchisement of European women, the Rhodesia Women’s League, using the feminist discourse of “equality”, demanded in the press “equal legislation” for white men and women with regard to sexual segregation between black and white (Schmidt 177). This is yet another example of how feminism has been constituted, in some historical instances, as much by the forces of racialism and puritanism as by an emancipatory project. Nonetheless, as Schreiner’s Trooper Peter Halket demonstrates, the exploitation of black women by white men was certainly a factor in determining the feminist response to miscegenation, although this was perhaps not uppermost in the minds of most white feminists. Certainly white women’s organisations and individual white women were active in articulating anew the discourse of colonialism to serve the perceived racial and domestic interests of white women.

Perhaps the most famous South African example of a white woman writer whose novels entered the battle against the perceived evils of miscegenation is Sarah Gertrude Millin. J.M. Coetzee relates Millin’s depiction of miscegenation to scientific discourses of race current at the time, isolating the scientific themes of “degenerativity”, “taint” and “flaw” in Millin’s fiction. Coetzee also shows Millin’s awareness of the profound taboo against women even thinking about the possibility of miscegenation because of its origin in “the meanest of lusts” (156). This taboo is so strong that Millin shows “pure-blooded women” fleeing in order to avoid “[seeing] those brown creatures, and [thinking] how they came into the world” (qtd. in Coetzee 156).

Gertrude Page foregrounds white women’s responses to interracial sex in her novel The Silent Rancher. Published in 1909 and termed “One of the best novels we have read this season” by a reviewer from The Pall Mall Gazette (quoted in the

publisher's advertisements on the page facing the title page of The Great Splendour), this novel was written at a time when the question of interracial sex and miscegenation within the British Colonial Service was receiving particular attention. In this year, a sexual directive known as the "morals despatch" was issued to all officials of the British Colonial Service. This directive discouraged the practice of concubinage with indigenous women by members of the Service, and noted the serious penalties for any transgressions of the ruling (Hyam 157). The "morals dispatch" can be seen as a marker of the bourgeois rather than heroic values which had by 1912 infused official British articulations of their approach to colonial administration.

According to Hyam, the directive was issued in the wake of several notorious cases of concubinage within the Colonial Service, several of which took place in Northern and Southern Rhodesia. The "Rhodesian scandals" mentioned by Hyam include the cases of Thomas Raikes, and R.L. Harrison. Either case may have been models for Page's character Sir Henry Mahon:

In the spring of 1903 the conduct of T.A. Raikes, Assistant Native Commissioner for North Mazoe district, Mashonaland, in Southern Rhodesia, was the subject of official inquiry by W. S. Taberer, the acting Chief Native Administrator of Mashonaland. Thomas Raikes had kept three African women, following what he took to be, in the euphemism of the time, "a commonsense view with regard to health". He employed an African called Sombrero to go round the kraals looking for attractive girls (Hyam 171)

Harrison was Native Commissioner of Mkusi sub-district...in North-western Rhodesia. Charges were brought against him by Mr. G. Graham that he was using his official position to procure African women against their will. Harrison admitted concubinage with several women in 1907, but said it was with their full consent; in any case, he had now given the practice up Harrison married a European woman in 1908, and started a family. The High Commissioner, now Lord Seborne, felt that in view of this, Harrison's past conduct, though "most reprehensible", should be condoned and the offender allowed to retain his appointment. (Hyam 173-4)

In particular, the case of Harrison reveals possible connections to Page's character Sir Henry Mahon, who keeps black concubines. Significantly, however, Page's story

refuses Mahon the opportunity of redeeming himself by marriage to a white woman. Instead, in The Silent Rancher, Mahon is scorned by white womanhood and is refused the shelter of their redeeming white femininity. In Stockley's novel, Kraal Baby, a similar rejection takes place, but the white woman later regards her hard-heartedness with extreme regret.

Mahon is the fiancé of Page's heroine, Evelyn Harcourt, a young, innocent, and idealistic clergyman's daughter. Evelyn leaves England to marry Mahon after a whirlwind courtship. Page makes Mahon the Administrator of Northeastern Rhodesia, a region renowned for concubinage. (According to Hyam, concubinage was "exceedingly common" in the lonelier districts of Northeastern Rhodesia"[175].)

As pointed out above, Evelyn illustrates Page's ideas about the kind of influence which could be wielded by the British woman as a domesticating influence in the "wild" areas of the Empire. However, Evelyn's one flaw is her lack of knowledge of the ways of the world, which must be overcome before she can be the ideal colonial woman. Ranger Metcalfe, the hero and eponymous "Silent Rancher" of the novel, warns Evelyn indirectly about the nature of society in Northeastern Rhodesia: "Morals, for instance, are allowed a considerable margin", he says. Slightly embarrassed, Evelyn reveals the dream that has inspired her: "If there is purity at the head, it filters down. I should like my little court ... to love purity" (86).

The word "purity" had a particularly sexual meaning to the British public since at least 1869 and the launch of Josephine Butler's "Purity Campaign" (Hyam 149); and for a contemporary Rhodesian reader, it is probable that the word "purity" might have had racial as well as sexual connotations. As Schmidt speculates about the aims of the Rhodesian "Purity League": "Since there were relatively few white women in the territory at that time, most of the transgressors were presumably European men and

African women" (176). The Silent Rancher follows the "purity" school of "new woman" fiction which attempted to redefine notions of a protected and innocent femininity by asserting that true "purity" required a knowledge of life, the facts of life, and, particularly, of the evils of men.

Despite Evelyn's conviction that it will be possible for her to influence the men of Northeastern Rhodesia simply by the example of her sexual "purity", Ranger Metcalfe is sceptical about the immaturity and inflexibility of her sexual morality, imagining that the only way to "get hold of the lonely young men she spoke of and raise their standard" would be through "unfailing camaraderie and wise understanding of human nature" (98). Evelyn learns to adjust her prejudices against divorced women, but her major learning experience arises from her narrow escape from marriage to the irredeemably degenerate Sir Henry Mahon.

Unlike the actual "Rhodesian scandal" of Mahon's possible prototype, Harrison, who was defended by officials because he had married a "European woman" and given up "the practice" of concubinage (Hyam 173-4), in The Silent Rancher white British women defy the "gentleman's code" of the British Colonial Service in order to rescue Evelyn from her engagement to Mahon. As in the case of the Rhodesia Women's League, this apparently feminist gesture of solidarity between white women is underpinned by the exclusion of the black women from the circle of feminine solidarity.

Gwendolen Leven discusses, with her husband Wynyard, the possibility of informing Evelyn about Mahon's transgressions. At first Wynyard, Secretary to the Administration of the civil service in Livingstone, is adamant that Gwendolen should not repeat an official report in which Mahon is charged with concubinage, "which [Wynyard] heard in confidence, and told [Gwendolen] in confidence" (266). Gwendolen rejects the claim to "honour" of this gentleman's code, insisting that "[Evelyn's] right to

know" was "stronger than any other right" (271). Page presents this difference of opinion as constituted by gender difference, which determines the respective loyalties of the husband and wife. Wynyard's loyalties lie with the masculine code of "honour" which demands adherence to the protocol of the British Colonial Service: "[a]s a man ... he had but one view. He could see nothing but the dishonour of an official secret wilfully betrayed" (272). However, Gwendolen insists that Mahon's transgression so seriously dishonours British womanhood that he has forfeited the protection of the official's code of honour:

For anyone in Sir Henry Mahon's position to not only set an example in following this evil, but be actually reported for excess, is betrayal of a trust far more widespread and significant than any possible question of betrayal in exposing him (272).

Gwendolen's opinion finally prevails over that of her husband when she succeeds in convincing him that Mahon's transgression is, first and foremost, a crime against British womanhood.

It will be known by instinct that this sort of thing is revolting beyond words to a pure-minded girl... every man who is doing what Sir Henry Mahon has been reported for will have it brought home to him more forcibly than ever before what the best women of his own country think of him, and how much cause he has in their eyes to be ashamed. I feel more strongly about it than you, perhaps, can Wyn; partly because the mere idea outrages the white woman Perhaps, too, the surest salvation will come through the women. If we set our faces definitely against it, and make no secret of our disgust, it is, at any rate, a move in the right direction, and a trust fulfilled to the best of our endeavour for those who come after (273-4).

In the same speech, Gwendolen presents white women's rejection of interracial sex as a laudable, nationalist gesture – she sees it as a "grave evil menacing [Rhodesia's] future" (273). The exposure of an important official such as Mahon is "all the better for the country"; and Evelyn's personal action of breaking an engagement is redefined as a political act which will serve the future interests of the country: "She

strikes a blow, right away, at an evil that is on the increase, and Rhodesia will be indebted to her" (273).

The force of Gwendolen's logic leaves Wynyard convinced, and the chapter ends with him deferring to her feminine authority over an official issue, now redefined as rightly belonging to the feminine sphere: "Darling, you have made me see that it may be very much a woman's question, apart altogether from a man's" (276). Thus Page redefines interracial sex, a political, racial and administrative question, and brings it fully under the jurisdiction of bourgeois domestic ideology.

The novel's gestures of defiance toward the colonial authority that often turned a blind eye to concubinage, however, are constituted by a double movement where ladylike "fleeing" from the spectre of interracial sex in fact allows the unspeakable topic to assume larger and larger proportions. While interracial sex is a major theme of the novel, the theme is never straightforwardly named. Page's strategy employs silence and whispers. Like Millin's "pure-blooded women", Page and her feminine characters "flee" from words such as miscegenation, concubinage and interracial sex.

From the start of the novel, Page allows the unspeakable signification of Mahon's crime to be felt. When characters refer to Mahon, the atmosphere is full of "expressive gesture[s]", ellipses, and silences meant "significantly" (35, 83). When Ranger Metcalfe finally broaches the issue, Page's narration euphemistically circumlocutes "the delicate subject" (175). Later, Gwendolen and her husband devote an entire conversation to the sole topic of whether Gwendolen should inform Evelyn about Mahon. During this conversation, both refer only to "this evil", "this sort of thing", "it", "excess", "what Sir Henry Mahon has been reported for" and "the mere idea" (272, 273, 274, 276). This strategy obviously uses the reader's prurience to build suspense in

the novel. Page, by fleeing the scene of interracial sex, is in fact sharpening the reader's desire to imagine the unspeakable.

Even at the climactic moment where Gwendolen reveals to Evelyn the nature of her fiancé's transgression, "the subject" is anonymously "introduced"; and at first the reader sees only Evelyn's convulsive reaction to the news "the red blood mounted slowly up Evelyn's neck and cheeks, until, in a spasm of disgust, she hid her face in her hands" (279-80). Finally, on being implored to do so by Evelyn, Gwendolen speaks the unspeakable:

There is not much else to tell. For some time Sir Henry Mahon has been especially addicted to this form of vice, and has kept a certain establishment always at hand, known as his "black harem". No one took much notice, because this sort of thing is very general in some parts of Africa; though, of course, his position of responsibility made excess in him even worse than in others. Recently, however, he overstepped all bounds, and a report, exposing him, was sent to headquarters (280).

Even in this passage, where Mahon's unspeakable transgression is finally named, Page's text can only "name" by a misnomer. The discourse of Orientalism allows the erasure of the abuses of official power wielded over indigenous women by colonial officials such as Harrison and Raikes – and instead identifies Mahon's crime as a form of Oriental degeneracy and vice (his "black harem").

Stockley's difference from Page is clearly apparent in Kraal Baby, her last novel, and her only novel which deals with miscegenation. Stockley's tolerant portrayal of the miscegenator, Dan Leonard, is unusual, when compared to the novels of other white women writers who deal with interracial sex, including those of Page and Schreiner. This tolerance is in line with Stockley's general inclination towards the heroic and away from the bourgeois.

Dan Leonard in Kraal Baby is a new incarnation of Stockley's favourite heroic hunter figures. Nicknamed "Soda Leonard" because "he drank his whisky neat", he is

known throughout Africa "as a big game hunter and a bad man" because of his liaison with Margaret, a black woman:

Once upon a time [Dan Leonard] was a Member of Cape Parliament, and Margaret kept house for him for many years and had three children by him. When this leaked out, or rather was exposed by another Member, he had to leave public life. By that time he was tired of Margaret, so he sent her back to Bergfontein where she hailed from, and she settled in a neat little house on the edge of the Location, away from the whites, but not completely with the blacks. That was like her life: not quite belonging to one lot or the other. Dan Leonard meanwhile roamed around Africa shooting lions and elephants, and they said he was bold, brave, and as careless of his life as of what people thought. He still paid Margaret a friendly visit sometimes, if he happened to be in those parts, and he didn't care who saw him driving his tandem, or span of four powerful greys harnessed to a Cape-cart, towards the Native Location, or who knew that he was going there to visit "Mrs. Leonard". Her real Basuto name was lovely: Malila; but she liked to be called Mrs. Leonard, and looked at you gratefully when you so addressed her (9-10).

The narrator and heroine, Linnet, expresses the customary South African horror at Dan and Margaret's children, who "were considered more shameful than [Margaret]" (11). Margaret's son, David, is briefly sketched in order to reveal the "awful misery" of the excluded half-caste (12). However, Dan Leonard himself is presented sympathetically. From Stockley's perspective, indifference to social pressures, especially the pressures of bourgeois domesticity, is often a positive characteristic, especially in her "bad men" such as Lundi Druro and Anthony Kinsella. In addition, Dan Leonard is the father of the heroine.

Linnet's birth is a mystery. Found in a kraal as a baby, she is adopted by an impoverished and alcoholic foster-father. He takes ill and dies, and Linnet is then cared for by Carlie de Villiers, a well-to-do young Afrikaans woman, and is blissfully happy until other children taunt her with the accusation that she has "black blood" in her veins (50). However, she is soon taken from Carlie by Dan Leonard, who reveals himself as her real father. On getting to know him, Linnet discovers a softer side to this "bold famous man" (11). Although he is still presented in terms which bespeak extreme

masculinity, Dan Leonard has “a voice whose softness was surprising, coming from that big, red-faced, golden man” (56). However, he refuses to identify Linnet’s mother.

Before sending Linnet to study singing in Paris, Dan Leonard takes her with him on a long shooting trip into the African interior, where she falls in love with the hero, John Anthony Rivington, or Riv. Linnet’s love affair with Riv is interrupted by the war, when he hears rumours about her dubious parentage and breaks off the relationship. The source of these rumours is Guy Champneys, who has known Linnet since her childhood. Champneys tells both Riv and Linnet that her mother is Margaret Leonard. Dan Leonard dies before Linnet can discover the truth, but Margaret Leonard insists that she is not Linnet’s mother. However, in papers left for her by Dan Leonard, Linnet discovers her birth certificate (which reveals that her mother is Carlie de Villiers), and she also finds the marriage certificate of Carlie and Dan Leonard. The mysteries of her birth satisfactorily revealed, Linnet is free to marry Riv and is reunited with her mother, Carlie.

Although Linnet’s ancestry is eventually shown to be whiter than white, the novel exploits the sensational potential of the possibility that she might have a black mother. Stockley includes a melodramatic scene where Linnet returns to Margaret’s house, saying, “I have come home, Mother” (258).

Margaret Leonard is a paradoxical portrayal. She is utterly loyal to Carlie, her white rival, although she mourns all her life for the loss of Dan Leonard as a lover. However, she feels no bitterness about her loss: “I am only a coloured woman. I knew what I was doing, when I went to live with Dan Leonard, and proud to do it” (261).

A critique of white men’s exploitation of black women, such as Schreiner’s in Trooper Peter Halket, does not feature in this story. Neither does Stockley join Page’s moral crusade against white men’s degenerate perversity. Although Carlie rejects Dan

Leonard when she discovers his past liaison with Margaret, she later attributes the violence of her reaction to her shame at her own seduction by Leonard, and to her youthful acceptance of her father's violent prejudice against miscegenation:

You must remember that I was very young, and had inherited a particular intolerance for the offence of white men mating with black women; and my father had been striving for years to introduce a Bill in Parliament to make it a criminal offence. If it had not been for these things I might have relented later ... But I could not bring myself to break my father's heart (292-3).

In Stockley's cosmology, the well-bred domestic woman should be forgiving of heroic lapses, as she herself is a sexual being and, most importantly, they do not threaten her supreme position. Carlie's father, as staunch Afrikaner patriarch and legislator is in fact the figure who ultimately enforces the divide between white man and black woman.

Conclusion

According to Jenny Sharpe, Victorian women "negotiate for power within a finite range of gender roles that constitute the cultural norm" (10), and this is certainly also the case with Page. Page's appropriations of colonial nationalism in the interests of white womanhood reveal a degree of flexibility in the colonial and nationalist discourses which marginalise women and femininity. Page is helped in her appropriation by the fact that her chosen discourses are those which extend "domestic virtues to the civilizing mission" and which model the colonial project on bourgeois feminine domestic power and subjectivity (Sharpe 10). As Robert Young points out, following Homi Bhabha, an understanding of colonial discourse "must include the question of enunciation, that is, of who is speaking to whom" (Young 142). Just as Homi Bhabha has shown that the English Bible acquires an entirely new meaning in India, so British Colonial Discourse, when enunciated by British women, takes on distinctly new resonances.

In contrast, Stockley's fiction contains moments which reject imperial definitions of bourgeois motherhood, and which recuperate the pioneering discourses of racial

conflict and heroic masculinity in constructing a Rhodesian national identity. As a result of this rejection, Stockley's sensational fiction constructs an ambivalently portrayed femininity which is not initially easily accommodated to the categories of imperialist discourse. These ambivalences are analysed more carefully in the following chapter.

¹ Stockley's epigraph is taken from Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" (Rudyard Kipling's Verse 323).

Chapter Seven:

Cynthia Stockley and the Novel of Sensation: Cutting Femininity

The previous chapters have shown that Rhodesian and British nationalist discourses in many cases relied on the construction of certain idealised images of femininity and maternity. These domestic and sentimentalised images dominated patriotic representations of femininity, since the proper lady epitomised bourgeois femininity. However, these idealised images co-existed with images of another, less proper femininity. While Gertrude Page only occasionally “breaks rank” with the requirements of the idealising discourse of domesticity, Cynthia Stockley was notorious for her scandalous portrayals of women in Africa. Stockley’s controversial images were certainly influential in the construction of a specifically Rhodesian nationalism, but they were also potentially subversive of the bourgeois “imagined community” preferred by Page and Jollie. In addition, her images constituted a substantial challenge to the notion of an “innocent” domestic space, as defended by Selous in his version of heroic British chivalry. All these characteristics probably contributed to Southern Rhodesia’s rather different attitudes towards Page and Stockley, as articulators of Rhodesian identity. The anti-bourgeois connotations of Stockley’s fascination with feminine impropriety may also explain the T.L.S. reviewer’s comment that *The Claw* was unrepresentative of an “Anglo-Saxon colony”, and Snyman’s disgust at her uncomplimentary portrait of “Rhodesian womanhood”.

Stockley’s palette includes the following shades of the improper feminine: the counterfeit and malicious domestic woman; the villainess – an angelic demon eventually unveiled in grotesque lack; the passionately transgressive but innocent heroine; and, finally, the personification of a bewitching but sadistic feminine Africa. Discussing Stockley’s personified Africa as a “witch or enchantress to whom the settlers are in

thrall” Anthony Chennells points out how such images of unwilling but inescapable love are a part of Stockley’s Rhodesian nationalism, because they allow her to avoid “sentimental patriotism” and imputations that the settlers are in Africa for crude financial reasons (246). He also shows that the image allows Stockley to account for character flaws and the failure of productivity in her Rhodesian settlers: “Men going to the dogs because they loved not wisely but too well possess a noble pathos” (246).

This analysis is, I think, quite accurate, when considered in relation to the settlers’ and the British public’s perception of Rhodesia’s failure to live up to initial promises of wealth and productivity. However, mere historical exigency does not explain the peculiar delight with which Stockley depicts the power of this feminised force. Nor does it explain why Page is not similarly attracted to the image, or why Stockley’s images were not universally applauded as patriotic propaganda for Rhodesia.

Chennells’s exclusively political focus means that he does not question the fundamentally gendered nature of the image, or its connection to other gendered images in Stockley’s work. This chapter explores the constellation of anti-domestic discourses on femininity which inflected Stockley’s explanation of Rhodesia’s failures of productivity in this particular way. My contextualisation of the discourses notes Stockley’s adaptation of the anxieties, implicit in the novel of sensation, about domesticity; and about the unreliable, shifting nature of femininity. I also delineate the ambivalences about feminine sexuality which Stockley adopted from the decadents and aesthetes of the fin de siècle.

Woman to Woman: Sentimental vs. Sensational Perspectives on the Feminine Sphere

Never let it be thought that women hang together in a body because they love each other so much: the reason is that deserters are stoned.

Cynthia Stockley, Virginia of the Rhodesians

The sentimental bourgeois novel, with which Page was identified, tends to idealise women's interactions with other women as a "special" mode of human interaction, non-oppressive in nature and characterised by co-operation and lack of competitiveness. This view of women's interaction was popularised in the nineteenth century through the massive sentimental movement in women's writing, religion, and popular philosophy (as discussed in chapter 1). As Jane Tompkins points out, Harriet Beecher Stowe, a central figure in this movement, immortalised an ideal community ruled by sentimental values in her description of "The Quaker Settlement" in Uncle Tom's Cabin. Here she depicts the rule of "loving words, and gentle moralities, and motherly loving kindness"(Stowe 166). In this ideal community "[t]he home is the center of all meaningful activity, women perform the most important tasks, work is carried on in a spirit of mutual co-operation, and the whole is guided by a Christian woman" (Tompkins 97). Women, in the sentimental tradition, do not exercise their powers through oppressive and cruel methods. Unlike the male villains in Uncle Tom's Cabin, even Southern women like Mrs. Shelby are able "with apparent ease, and without severity" to bring their households "into harmonious and systematic order" (254). The sins of Marie St. Clair, Stowe's most negatively portrayed female character ("indolent and childish, unsystematic and improvident" [254]) are sins of omission rather than commission.

Using Nancy Armstrong's framework for understanding the power which the domestic woman came to wield, however, it is possible to read Stowe's apparently effortless "mutual co-operation" and benevolent rule in terms of the subtle control and vigilance exerted by domestic women over one another. This particular form of control and vigilance is caricatured by a misogynist tradition which, resenting women's

domestic and sexual powers, identifies all interactions between women as necessarily mutually suspicious, envious, and undermining. As Lyn Pykett points out, sensation fiction represented such feminine power in terms of women's competitiveness:

Women's power is usually exercised only in relation to children and other women. This subordinated form of power, and the intra-female rivalry it produces, are central to the novel's emotional dynamics (125).

Sensation fiction expressed this negative stereotype in particularly unsettling ways. As pointed out in chapter 1, the villainess of sensation fiction displays cruelty, immorality and general disobedience to the dictates of femininity and disrupts the consensus of the domestic sphere, especially in her unsettling mimicry of the angelic feminine ideal. The instability of the feminine ideal is also conveyed by the ambivalently portrayed heroine of sensation fiction, who is not always adequately differentiated from the villainess.

For Gertrude Page, the white women of the colonies are essential to one another's survival, and it is the absence or apathy of a feminine support network which jeopardises the morale, morals and sometimes the lives of lonely and inexperienced Englishwomen in Africa, such as Enid from Love in the Wilderness, and Joyce from The Edge O' Beyond. On the other hand, feminine support usually rescues the women before all is lost – as in the case of Enid, whose deceased mother's letter gives her strength in her moral quandary. Evelyn of The Silent Rancher, as pointed out in chapter 6, is rescued from marriage to Mahon when Gwendolen's sense of (white) feminine solidarity wins out over her husband's adherence to the masculine code of honour. The Writer-Woman provides an example to Jill, in Jill's Rhodesian Philosophy, of how to transform her frustration and boredom into an adequately virile and nationalistic motherhood. Joe, in "Where the Strange Roads Go Down" rescues the disillusioned English bride, Nita Dubeen, from near-seduction by Denison, the pioneer. In complete contrast, Cynthia

Stockley depicts the bonds between women as malicious and cruel fetters, rather than as anchors of mutual support and harmony.

Certain characteristic moments in Stockley's fiction enact the return to the feminine community of the cruelty and sexuality which are forbidden in the domain of sentiment. Like the sensation novels on which it was modelled, Stockley's fiction employs discourses of the improper feminine within the often idealised and sentimentalised sphere of the proper feminine, in order to represent feminine cruelty and sexuality. Lyn Pykett asserts that sensation fiction should not be read simply as "either the transgressive or subversive field of the improper feminine, or as the contained, conservative domain of the proper feminine", but should rather be seen as "a site in which the contradictions, anxieties and opposing ideologies of Victorian ideology converge and are put into play", thus registering and negotiating "a wide range of profound cultural anxieties about gender stereotypes, sexuality, class, the family and marriage" (50-51).

A mutilating and malicious femininity is the epitome of Stockley's settled domesticity, and her domestic women can often be read to reveal the limitations, frustrations, and abuse of petty powers which characterise the domestic world to which women were confined, and which her heroines despise. Stockley's early narrators unsympathetically rip the veils of sentiment from the feminine sphere. In the place of the homely they reveal a realm of unholy malice. In the place of the gentle domestic woman, they reveal calculating artifice and animal cruelty.

Stockley's first novel, Virginia of the Rhodesians, displays considerable sympathy with transgressive feminine sexuality, and the narrator, Virginia, departs substantially from the ideal of the proper feminine. Her complicity with the immorality, malice and superficial values of the unholy feminine sphere is not entirely obliterated,

despite the ending of the novel which attempts to convert her into an appropriately sentimental domestic woman. The anti-domestic perspective which is so evident in Virginia of the Rhodesians allowed Stockley to present a critique of settler domesticity without valorising its “masculine” alternative – the heroic discourses adopted by Selous, Darter and Haggard.

“Other Women”

Stockley’s initial romantic sympathy for wild and passionate women who are excluded from respectable feminine society decreases, and her heroines become gradually less transgressive. Virginia’s complicity with the dissembling immorality of the feminine subculture and her rejection of domesticity is replaced by a dual identification – with the innocence of the proper woman, and the natural, full sexuality attributed to the racial “other” woman. This dual identification with terms which conventionally stand in clear opposition to one another results in complex discursive effects, the more notable of which I outline below.

Stockley’s construction of the feminine sexuality of her heroines relies on a discourse of feminine wildness and otherness similar to that seen in George Egerton’s use of Orientalist motifs. “Other” women (the black woman, the Boer woman, the sexualised woman) are consequently less clearly differentiated from Stockley’s heroines than is the case in most domestic novels, and their imagined access to the powers of sexuality and of bodily femininity is ambivalently portrayed. First, their profusion of “natural” power is transferred to the heroine; second, the “other” women themselves are decisively neutralised. The plenitude of Stockley’s heroines is, as a result, seen in opposition to the neutralised “other” women, who lack such fullness.

The identification of the heroine with the wild forces of Africa solves the problem of pairing the heroine with the heroic pioneer who is not attracted to

domestic femininity or to a settled, bourgeois life. The romance can take place through the mediation of the landscape, or of a personified Africa. Africa, as feminised landscape, is a powerful incarnation of romanticised wildness, which, however, also wields the terrifying and enslaving “claw”. This motif resurrects the neutralised “other” woman, and is borrowed from the heroic romance, where powerful, improper femininity, as personified by Haggard’s Ayesha, is both desired and feared by the hero. Stockley’s heroines identify with this fascinatingly passionate feminine otherness, thus becoming appropriate objects of desire for the hero.

However, in Stockley’s model, the heroic romance, ambivalence towards such primal feminine powers is the result not only of desire, but also of horror. Consequently, in this sub-genre, the primal femininity of figures such as Ayesha must eventually be decisively annihilated. Ayesha’s death, where her fascinating beauty is reduced to a grotesquely shrunken, shrivelled and monkey-like corpse, is paralleled in Stockley’s fiction by a similar ritualised moment – the mutilation or annihilation of the transgressive villainess.

Virginia of the Rhodesians

Virginia of the Rhodesians, Stockley’s first published novel, reveals a moment when her notions of femininity have not yet settled into the formulaic oppositions which began to appear in Poppy, and which are incorporated into most of her subsequent novels. In this novel, unholiness pervades the world of female interactions and is the constitutive mark of femininity, with the hero finally attempting to rescue the heroine for a sanitised domesticity. Another interesting feature of the narrative is its exploration of a wide repertoire of fictional representations of feminine sexuality – tragic, comic, and villainous – while the conventionally judgemental or patronising stances adopted by the domestic romance towards the “fallen woman” are conspicuously absent.

Apart from the conventional romance ending where he “tames” Virginia, the hero, Gayer Waybrant, plays a very small role in comparison to that of the women in the story. Instead, the novel focuses on feminine characters and on women’s relationships with other women. The epigraph to the novel is the following quotation from Kipling:

And the end of it's sittin' and thinkin'
And dreamin' hell fires to see,
So be warned by my lot, which I know you will not
And learn about women from me.

Implicitly, Stockley appears to identify with the position of the jocular male narrator of the poem; the purpose of her novel can be read as a warning about and explanation of feminine nature. While the warnings in Kipling's poem concern feminine seductiveness, Stockley has a far more thorough and considerably less complimentary exposé in mind.

Despite Virginia's conversion to seriousness and family values in its closing pages, the novel is inconsistent in its condemnation of certain feminine qualities.

Virginia, as narrator, mocks and criticises the cattiness and superficiality of certain feminine characters, but her own voice is characteristically equally catty and superficial. Feminine frivolity and wiles are alternately mocked and celebrated, and the tone of the novel is, for the most part, witty, cynical and epigrammatic.

The novel employs several discourses to represent feminine sexuality. A romanticised view of the passionate woman, a villainisation of the adulterous woman, and a humorous view of the comically desirous woman are the three discourses by which the major female characters are presented as tragic, sinister and comic incarnations of feminine sexuality. As a result, the novel provides no overall or coherent moral framework. Stockley does not draw clear distinctions on the basis of sexual morality between her heroines, comic characters and villainesses. Instead, her morality is an aestheticist ethic of surfaces, and of style, like that of Oscar Wilde's Lord Henry, from The Picture of Dorian Gray, who comments: “It is better to be beautiful than to be good.

But . . . it is better to be good than to be ugly" (271). In *Virginia*, the tragic and sinister characters possess the power of seamless, effortless beauty, while the comic characters do not. Both tragic characters (Christine Carden and Dorothy Kallender) and sinister characters (Mrs Ffollett) are transgressive. However, while Christine and Dorothy must suffer for their passions, Mrs. Ffollett's waywardness has brought her success – this establishes Mrs. Ffollett as the villainess. The "good" domestic women are consistently portrayed negatively, until the end of the novel, when Virginia joins their ranks.

The passionate woman vs. the domestic woman

In the opening scene of the novel, Christine Carden, symbolically dressed in scarlet, is contrasted with her "plaintive" sister-in-law Blanche, who epitomises English domesticity (2). Christine, sitting in the darkness outside her brother's Rhodesian home, declares Blanche's domain, inside the house, too confining a space for her: "I want to think, and I can't rest in the house" (2). Christine is at home in African space in a way that Blanche, frightened by the "wild darkness" is not (3). Blanche finds Christine, like the "African night", frightening and unsettling ("eerie") (2).

Immediately after establishing this contrast, the novel presents Christine, the passionate woman, ritually mutilating the image of the "proper woman". At first, the scene reads simply as one of enraged jealousy. Made reckless by the thought that her lover, Ralph, has been killed, Christine runs across the veld to his house, enters his room and savours it as a male space, undisciplined and untamed by female hands. Wandering about the room among Ralph's possessions "which lay about in wild agglomeration" she goes as far as to dip her finger into "the stale froth of soap" left on an envelope on which Ralph had earlier wiped his razor (6). A portrait of Ralph's fiancée, presiding over his table, catches her eye, and, in "wild anger" she destroys it:

She caught it up and flung it crashing to the floor. It fell with the smiling face upwards, and in a moment the girl's small heel was through the glass and had crushed the pictured features out of recognition (7-8).

Subsequently, the text identifies the fiancée (who later marries Ralph) as Mrs. Karuth, an emblem of icy and unforgiving purity, and a "proper woman". She wields, with her respectability, considerable power over other, less respectable women, and Virginia and the comic Mrs Skeffy court her with a degree of cynicism: "She was one of those good women who can make things hum for the women they don't approve of; the kind of women that frisky people like to have on their visiting lists" (61).

On the other hand, the "frisky" Virginia is fascinated by Christine, the loose woman, "travelling about alone and unattached" (70). When the upright Mrs. Karuth discovers that Christine has given birth to Ralph's child, she responds by instantly cutting Christine off, isolating her in a separate mental domain – "the horror of outer darkness" (113). Virginia comments "Only good women can do these things – and may Heaven forgive them" (113).

Cutting femininity

In this novel, the "cut" which isolates Christine from respectable society is a punishment repeatedly inflicted on women by other women. When Mrs Kat's flirtatious escapades become known, warns Virginia, she will "be cut from Bulawayo to Beira" (138). It is the particular power of the domestic woman (wielded with all the more enthusiasm, implies the narrator, because it is her only power) to "cut" her more passionate sisters in this way.

Imagining Mrs Skeffy's response to her planned elopement, Virginia consoles herself by reflecting that, although she will be "cut" by women such as Mrs. Skeffy if she elopes with Sumarez, the cruelty and hypocrisy of the sanctimonious feminine moral majority originates in their own frustrated sexual desires:

Women like [Mrs Skeffy] don't matter. I took comfort to think that when she gave up the ghost the devil would march her back ... to do a few sins instead of only thinking and talking them (252).

The villainess, Mrs. Ffollett, is given a certain amount of sympathy when she describes her isolation from feminine society after having "gone to the devil": "it's such a miserably lonely place. There never seem to be any other women there but oneself" (256). However, from a different perspective, the narrator envies her freedom from the limitations of feminine society. Mrs. Ffollett's isolation from respectable women means that she is able to devote herself entirely to the men who surround her – and, from Virginia's perspective, this is a not altogether undesirable alternative:

Sometimes there would be quite an influx of [other women's husbands coming to visit Mrs. Ffollett] in carts, rickshas and on horseback, and on such occasions I should be sure to discover afterwards that there had been a mothers' meeting in Maritzburg, or a woman's conference somewhere at the other end of Natal (207).

Seen in this light, respectable domesticity is a particularly unglamorous alternative to Mrs. Ffollett's lifestyle.

"Cut", the conventional expression for exclusion from respectable society, takes on a particularly horrible literal meaning in the context of Virginia's feline images of the feminine malice which rules settler society in Salisbury. For Virginia, women's competitiveness takes priority over even the dictates of romantic love: "no woman would be happily married unless she thought some other woman had wanted to marry her man first" (108). This cynicism extends to her view of women's friendships. In Salisbury and Durban, women "flick" acquaintances "deliberately and delicately on the raw", murmur "cuttingly", say "sweet things" about their "dearest enemies" collect the "scalp[s]" of men, and generally thrive in a circle of malice (68,107,124, 156,165,251). Virginia defines her relationship to this circle as follows:

“I’m sure I’m not the kind of girl to waste any time or feeling on other women – I know too much about them” (79).

For Virginia, the domain of femininity becomes synonymous with a feline battleground – claws, teeth and jaws are her favourite images to describe women’s interaction with one another. What men see as innocuous “tea-slop and a lot of women’s gossip” is, in fact, a fight to the death (148). Virginia’s skilled participation in these battles demonstrates her considerable mastery of this particular form of feminine interaction. On one occasion, she attends a tea-party and there cleverly discredits a particularly juicy item of gossip about Mrs. Kat. Virginia is smart enough to ensure that it is not herself, but another woman, who subsequently receives the brunt of the tea-party’s frustrated malice. The other women, secretly enraged at losing the opportunity for scandal, vent their anger on the nearest target, the sentimental and sanctimonious Mrs Sotheby:

Then little Mrs. Sotheby, who was happily married and wanted everyone else to be the same, plucked up courage to remark that she thought it quite right and nice of Mrs. Kat to tell her husband, and that if more women, etc., etc. But that was more than the other women could stand. They had had their scandal snatched from their very jaws, as it were, ... but they were not going to be preached at by Mrs. Sotheby. I left them rending her (148).

Homoerotic Desire

In the midst of all this poisonous femininity is one positive relationship between Virginia and another woman. What they have in common, however, is their difference from the rest of womankind. Virginia’s role model is the powerful and tragic Dorothy Kallender, whose particular qualities allow her to hold court over men but make other women her mortal enemies. This ability to infuriate other women is precisely what attracts Virginia to her:

She always wore ravishing frocks, was never sea-sick, and looked at the women through her eyelashes in a peculiarly aggravating way which commended itself to me. They hated her, but it welded an indissoluble bond between us. (14-15)

Virginia is the “only woman who ever loved her” (13). This is so, it is implied, because Virginia is not a woman, according to the stereotypically joyless, domestic definition:

You are the only woman in Mashonaland with any sense of humour, Virginia,” she would say; “and I believe you are a boy” (16).

Virginia’s affections for her role-model touch on the homoerotic, and in this way she begins to understand the sexual power by which Dorothy makes men “infatuated and mad”:

I think there must be something of the man in me, for I suffered a leaping of the heart at the sight of her revealed and suggested beauty. It lured my lips to her, and stooping, I kissed her where the curving outline of her cheek melted into her lips. The blood flushed scarlet on the spot where my lips had been, and spread all over her neck and face.

“You silly child”, she said. “Virginia, I believe you are a boy” (19).

This homoerotic moment is never repeated as explicitly in the later and more conventional fiction. As will be discussed below, a variant of this moment is discernible where the heroine shifts from a feminine identification, towards identification with a heroic masculinity, and expresses a desire for union with the sexualised landscape.

Decadence and artifice

In Virginia, Stockley is influenced by a “decadent” aesthetic of feminine beauty and sexuality. From 1898, Stockley, as journalist, actress and aspiring novelist, moved in the bohemian and dramatic circles of fin de siècle London and Paris, and was clearly influenced by decadents such as Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, and Charles Baudelaire. The decadents were widely perceived as a degenerative force, in their use of sexually explicit themes. However, Elaine Showalter points out that the decadents in fact distrusted bodily femininity:

In decadent writing, women are seen as bound to Nature and the material world because they are more physical than men, more body than spirit. They appear as objects of value only when they are aestheticised as corpses or phallicised as femmes fatales (x).

In this context, Charles Berheimer shows the importance to the decadent creed of “the primacy of artifice over nature, the value of cosmetic ornament, the sense of art as an enchanting fakery, a surface play of masks and disguises” (63).

Stockley’s romantic attraction to a discourse which values wildness and “nature” over civilised convention conflicts with her sympathies for decadent aesthetics, but the flexibility of her romances, as fantasies, does not force her to choose one model of feminine beauty over another. In Virginia, Stockley’s feminine characters are represented in the following three ways: first, through an aestheticised discourse borrowed from the decadents; second, in terms of the horrors of “natural” physicality; and finally, through a realistic awareness of the feminine techniques of artifice which attempt to conceal the imperfections of the flesh.

Christine Carden, another tragic feminine character in Virginia of the Rhodesians, effortlessly maintains a mirage of beauty which is invulnerable to the perils that beset female flesh. Christine’s sexuality is metonymically represented as the unearthly effect of colour, light, and fragrance: “The scarlet figure swayed, and another rush of lavender stole on the air; a jewel sparkled somewhere amongst the scarlet” (2).

The vocabulary in which Christine is described is borrowed from the sensuous imagery used by the pre-Raphaelites and reveals the code of stylised feminine sexuality as used by Aubrey Beardsley. She is a “white flower” with a “little sad scarlet mouth” (98). Her beauty, while apparently innocent, in fact provides the clue to her sensual knowledge: “her thick unwavering black hair [was] parted in the middle and [fell] over the sides of her forehead into a knot behind, while at her throat she wore a great devil-

scarlet bow, the points of which reached right up to her ears, while the ends trailed away on to the floor". This reveals her as a "a Madonna who knew all the seven deadly sins and one other beside" (86).

Christine's physical beauty, however, is also represented as romantically natural. While Virginia removes her hairpins, and cold-creams her nose for sunburn before going to sleep, she knows that Christine, with her "long moonlight coloured eyes" is not the type of woman to spend time on such activities (83):

I had a curious instinct that she was the kind of girl who would let her hair down in a wild tangle and sleep among it; which is all very nice and romantic, of course, but very uncanny for the other person in the room – besides being bad for the hair (82).

Christine is "uncanny" because of her lack of conformity to the beauty rituals of domestic femininity. Virginia comments humorously on how these rituals protect women from certain threatening forces within themselves: "If I lie like that I see visions" (82).

In women other than Christine, a "natural" femininity is merely grotesque, from Virginia's decadent perspective, as she observes: "Personally, I've no patience with these natural women – they're so often indecent" (237). Mrs. Kat, a comic character, makes herself ridiculous in her attempt to live up to precisely the images which Christine effortlessly personifies:

She was a tall, plump woman, and by rights should have been a merry, rowdy sort of soul; but it was clear that she aimed rather at being "weird intense" She draped her hair over her ears and let it flop in a "bun" at the back of her neck, and she looked sideways at one in a way that made me feel creepy. She had a pouting mouth, with the under lip stuck well out at the world, and of course I could see at once that she was trying to be New-arty and Beardsleyfied and all that; but she fell short of her desires – her hair was not black, nor her mouth red enough, and you couldn't get over her plumpness whichever way you looked at her (38-39).

While Mrs. Kat's body betrays her distance from the artificial ideals of decadent beauty, the accidental revelation of feminine contrivances is represented as

equally grotesque. Unlike Christine, other women do not achieve Stockley's ideal of feminine beauty without recourse to obviously artificial aids.

Mrs. Skeffy (a comical character) expends a great deal of energy upon fruitless attempts to attain beauty. Virginia comments ruthlessly, "she was massaging the marks under her eyes – which she called sun-lines and I called crow's feet" (80), and draws attention to her false "shining coils of gold hair" which "were so very much goldener than her fringe" (81). She also recounts with great glee how, with a "calmly critical eye", she once watched Mrs. Skeffy getting ready to go out:

No woman can do her complexion justice while another woman looks on. And her figure doesn't get justice either. When Nina [Mrs. Skeffy] went out, her waist was two inches larger and her eyebrows two inches lighter than usual, and she was nearly weeping with hatred (161).

As implied by her generalisation "no woman", Virginia herself is calculating about her own charms. At the Royal Hotel in Durban, she seats herself opposite "a large and extremely useful mirror" because she "liked to watch the effect of my hair on different people" and because she is aware that she looks best "in profile" (179). The novel of sensation expresses fears that proper femininity may be a role that is acted, rather than a true and timeless essence, by often making the proper lady indistinguishable from a coolly calculating villainess. In Virginia of the Rhodesians, these fears have become accepted as indubitable facts. Virginia's self-consciousness remains even after she begins to "repent" her flirtatious shallow ways at the end of the novel:

I was on lying on the floor face downwards, repenting my sins ... I turned on the light, put up my hair, which always comes down when I repent, and draped a lace scarf about my face, for repentance is one of the unbecoming emotions (286).

The present tense of "comes down", reveals the older, reflecting self of the narrator to be equally as frivolous as the younger, experiencing self. This deliberately

superficial and witty tone is sustained throughout much of the novel, and is often achieved by means of the above narrative device. As a result, the closure attained by the novel because of Virginia's "repentance" and conversion to the "deeper" values of the domestic woman is rendered questionable. Virginia's vow that her life after marriage to Gayer Waybrant is going to "mean something besides frivolling and flirtations and gowns and malice" is given the lie by her older, reflecting self who, as revealed in the narration, remains addicted to exactly these anti-domestic vices (294). There is not an appreciable enough distance between the voice of the reflecting self and the experiencing self for the novel to truly qualify as a Bildungsroman. Stockley's closing gesture at seriousness and domestic values is not entirely successful, and Virginia of the Rhodesians remains, for the most part, a novel of surfaces. Stockley's next novel, Poppy: The Story of a South African Girl, adopts those sentimental themes which Virginia despises, and incorporates them into the gothic framework of the novel of sensation.

Poppy

Decadent Beauty

In Virginia, the heroine aspires to but never fully possesses the impregnable, impossible beauty of Dorothy Kallender and Christine Carden. In Stockley's later romances, beginning with Poppy, such seamless beauty becomes the defining characteristic of and is the key to the unassailable power of the heroine. In Poppy, the heroine escapes her humble beginnings as ugly duckling and is transformed into a swan:

She was amazingly attractive in a glowing ardent fashion that paled the other women in the street and made men step to the edge of the pavement to stare at her (54).

Stockley's vocabulary of ideal female beauty, as established in Virginia, reappears in this description of Poppy's physical appearance. She repeats this code, unchanged, when describing many of her subsequent heroines. Poppy's charms are expressed as a collage of images borrowed from the aestheticist repertoire of the pre-Raphaelites and the decadents:

Her eyes look as though they were painted in by Burne-Jones, and she is dressed like a Beardsley poster; but I think she is only a girl who is glad to be alive (56).²

As in the case of the controversial Beardsley, Stockley's images of feminine charms did not receive universal applause. Gertrude Page refers snidely to Stockley's decadent aesthetic in her novel The Veldt Trail. It is only the frivolous Sybil Lack who accepts the romanticised, feminine image of Rhodesian life gleaned from novels such as Stockley's. She jokes that life in Rhodesia seems to be full of "nice things – like bridge and dancing. I've read about them. And women with Burne-Jones eyes..." (86). This image is altogether rejected by another character, who says, "I hate women with Burne-Jones eyes. They look sideways under long lashes – ugh" (86). Thus, implicitly, Page debunks Stockley's romanticisation, drawing attention to the unsettling lack of straightforwardness and uprightness which Beardsley's decadent images of femininity represented to many Victorians. Though both Page and Stockley constructed their Rhodesian patriotism around the figure of the woman, this is another indication of how divergent attitudes towards femininity and sexuality caused their representations to be somewhat at odds. Poppy, despite being an explicitly sexualised woman, is nonetheless chosen by the empire-building hero to accompany him on his patriotic mission to Borapota.

“Other” Women

Another development in Poppy is the arrival of racially “other” women on the scene.

The Boer woman and the black woman make their appearance, and play a particularly important role, as “definitional others”, in establishing the identity of the heroine.

Both figures symbolise the powers and horrors of bodily femininity. The horrors of the female body are expressed through their grotesque mutilation, and its powers are transferred to the passionate heroine.

In Poppy, Stockley’s own childhood experience of a stepmother may be represented through her stereotype of the Boer woman, Aunt Lena.³ Poppy is ill-treated by Aunt Lena, her Boer foster-mother. Instead of being sent to school, she is forced to perform demeaning domestic duties and has to take care of her younger cousins.

Stockley’s own biography suggests Ann Webb as Aunt Lena’s original. If this is true, it is significant that, in a gesture of double distancing, the English step-mother becomes the Boer foster-mother. This distancing through the Boer woman may well have been influenced by Schreiner’s famous image of the Boer foster-mother, Tant Sannie (from The Story of an African Farm). Like Tant Sannie, Aunt Lena’s Boer characteristics are manifest in her physical appearance:

The traces of mean thoughts and deeds showed in the narrow space between her eyebrows, in the specks in her pale eyes, were brushed into her sleek, putty-coloured hair and crinkled her coarse thick hands. If you only looked at the freckles and loose skin all round her wrists, her fat fingers and the way her ears stuck out, you must see how cruel and hateful she could be, thought Poppy (12).

Poppy responds to this icon of all that is hateful to her about the female body and feminine power with astonishingly cruel, violent and bloody fantasy of mutilation:

She would lie awake for hours, just to loathe her aunt and concoct tortures for her. In imagination she cut slits in that hated body and filled them

with salt and mustard, or anything that would burn; dug sharp knives into the cruel heart; saw the narrow hard face lying on the floor and beat into it with a hammer until it was red, red, red – and everything was red.

“Scorpion! Scorpion!” she would rave (14).

Here Stockley’s character fantasises about inflicting the “cut” which destroys oppressive maternal power. Black women, in this novel, are granted a more positive version of this bodily femininity, which soon, however, becomes the exclusive province of the heroine.

Black feminine characters are sketched in uncharacteristic detail in this novel. (In Stockley’s later novels they disappear from the scene almost completely.) Upon being rejected by her aunt, Poppy’s “only friend” is the black woman, “old Sara” (37). Unlike most other black characters in Stockley’s fiction, old Sara is given a life story. Together with certain other references to black women in the novel, old Sara functions, like Aunt Lena, as a “definitional other” in Stockley’s construction of Poppy’s feminine sexuality.

Certain moments in the novel imply that black women have access to an enviably uncomplicated “natural” sexuality and motherhood. This is evidence of the strain of romanticism in Stockley’s fiction which worships wildness and freedom. Poppy aspires to physical beauty and resolves to “find out from old Sara where that wonderful milky cactus grew, which the young Basuto girls gathered and rubbed upon their breasts in the moonlight to make them grow round and firm as young apples” (11-12). When Poppy, as expectant single mother, gives birth to her child in a shameful and cramped room in London, she recalls another romanticised image of African women:

the native women in her land ... when the time comes to bring forth, go quietly and make a soft green bed in some sheltered place, and there suffer in silence and alone; then, after a few hours, return as quietly to every-day work and go serenely on with life, the new-born child slung behind the shoulders. The thought appealed to Poppy. She said

“That is the way I should have borne my son if I had stayed in Africa ... out in the air – with the sun shining. But oh! these terrible walls that shut one in!” (246).

These moments in Poppy, then, create an image of black women as models of the strong, self-sufficient woman, in touch with nature, replete with a natural, innocent motherhood and sexuality. In contrast, old Sara bears the mark of her lack of such fullness. When Poppy asks her why she has not married and has no children, she responds with the corporeal gesture which, for Stockley, is the only way Sara can communicate her life story to Poppy:

Old Sara rolled her eyes mournfully at the child, and muttered some words in her own language. Then slowly she undid the buttons of many kinds and colours which adorned the front of her dress. From the left bosom she took a large bundle of rags, and placed them carefully on the floor, then opening her bodice wide, she revealed her black body bare to the waist. Poppy's astonished gaze fell upon a right breast – no object of beauty, but large and heavy; but where the left breast should be was only a little shrivel of brown skin high up out of line with the other.

That was old Sara's only answer to Poppy's question. (35)

Positioned somewhere between the pathetic and the grotesque, Old Sara's stunted breast signifies her lack, and marks a loss of idealised “natural” sexuality. This ambivalent moment removes the signifier of natural sexual fullness from the black woman, from whom, as later descriptions reveal, it is transferred to Poppy, as white South African heroine: As an adult, Poppy remembers Old Sara's revelation as evidence of her own early awakening of sexual knowledge:

I am not candid; I am not innocent ... I never was ... even when I was twelve I could understand the untold tale of passion in an old black woman's eyes ... she had only one breast, and she showed me that as a reason for having no home and children of her own ... I understood without being told, that in the sweet hour of her life the cup was dashed from her lips ... her lover left her when he found her malformed ... Immediately I began to sing a pæan of praise to the gods that my lover would never go lacking the gift of my breasts. (35)

In Stockley's later fiction, sexual and maternal fullness no longer belong to black female characters, and the veil of beauty is violently torn from the villainess:

true passionate sexuality and the fullness of motherhood belong only to Stockley's heroines and to a personified and feminised African landscape.

Mother Africa

When Poppy runs away from Bloemfontein, leaving behind both the hated Aunt Lena and the sympathetic but impotent old Sara she has recourse only to the African landscape as mother. Poppy finds in her natural environment the nurture and support which she has never received – to her, an “old mimosa tree” has “a curve in its trunk like the curve of a mother's arm” (16).

In this trope, the African landscape substitutes metonymically for the figure of the black woman. Other depictions of the landscape present metaphoric figures in which images of horrific and desirable femininity are semiotically mingled. Spending a night on the African veld, Poppy is terrified of the dawn – “a grey witch in a tale of horror”, “a terrible, shroudy vision creeping over the world” (30). This gothic image transfers feminine voraciousness and grotesqueness onto the landscape “It came very slowly and stealthily ... and ate up little patches of darkness as it came, swelling larger as it ate” (30).

Later, however, this horrific image of the African dawn is transformed into a more acceptable image of femininity “the grey witch had turned into a lovely lady, all decked in palest pink, with her arms spread wide in the sky, trailing long veils of sheeny lavender cloud behind her” (30).

At other moments, Poppy's identification with the powers of the landscape is expressed in metaphors of Africa as mother. Here the image of Old Sara reappears, now refigured in maternal plenitude. On the night of Poppy's encounter with the hero, Evelyn Carson, and of her initiation into sexual pleasure she calls on “Mother Africa”:

“What have you hidden in your bosom for me?” she whispered ... “I believe that if I sleep on your breast to-night I will dream my destiny. I love you, and

you love me...I am your child...a poppy growing in your old brown bosom. You are the only mother I have ever known...Whatsoever you give unto me, I will take and say it is good. I feel predestined to-night" (130).

"Mother Africa" gives Poppy not only unconditional, unthreatening love, but also passes on to her a passionate and "natural" sexuality. Poppy, as white woman, becomes the breast of Africa, the new breast. These images also allow the white woman to enter into the embrace between British hero and African woman/landscape which is the basic allegory of the imperial heroic romance. "Africa", in a sexualised incarnation, enslaves British men like Evelyn Carson with the force of their passion for her. Carson's refusal to leave Africa is compared to a sexual infatuation: "Africa has kissed him on the mouth and he will not leave her" (178). Poppy's African identity and heritage ensure that Carson will not leave her, either, and that she replaces the African woman/landscape in the allegory.

The Claw

In Stockley's novel, The Claw, the anti-domestic discourse of feminine sadism which characterised Virginia of the Rhodesians is transferred, in part, to the African landscape, while British domesticity is revalued. The feminine community is increasingly evaluated in terms of an opposing discourse, previously alien to Stockley's fiction – the natalist and sentimental requirements of a settler patriotism.

Deirdre, heroine of The Claw, represents an important step in Stockley's shift from the cynical and calculating Virginia to Stockley's later heroines (such as Felicia Lissell of Tagati), who are suffering, persecuted and noble. Virginia revels in the power which she has over her male admirers, but ultimately finds women significantly worthier opponents than the poor male victims of her light-hearted flirtations. Poppy, while never the sentimentalised "fallen woman", is a creature whose sexual and maternal passions cause her intense suffering. Deirdre is a victim of

the mutilating power and exclusion of the female settlers, and her life is made further miserable by the cruelty of her degenerate drunken husband, Maurice.

Unlike Virginia, who holds her own extremely well in the catfights of Salisbury, Deirdre is more vulnerable to attack. She arrives in Rhodesia and finds herself surveyed less than sympathetically by her sister-in-law and a circle of female friends:

They touched hands languorously and sank back into their chairs, fanning themselves with palm-leaf fans and gazing piercingly at me the dormant cat which is in every woman began to wake up in me and sharpen its claws; for all round about me in the room I began to hear the soft and gentle purring of other felines (43).

The feminine gaze of these women is both predatory and mutilating. Their eyes “rake” Deirdre’s “sun-flushed face and disarranged hair” (43). Confined to this panoptic circle of mutilating femininity and conventionality, and deprived of the freedom to explore the wild landscape, Deirdre longs to escape:

I stared at my sister-in-law reflectively, thinking how she had changed, and what bad luck it was to have to stay here amongst all these unfriendly women instead of being able to go right into the wild, deep heart of Africa. For the first time in my life I regretted not being a man (50).

As Anthony Chennells points out, the heroine’s perceptions of Africa are borrowed from the imperial romance. Her penetrative fantasy about the “heart” of Africa is not realised in the way she expects, and what she finds instead is an alternative romance – the romance of Rhodesian nationalism (248). Consequently, Stockley’s negative model of domestic femininity shifts to validate the middle-class values and mutually supportive behaviour of the “Fort George” women. Her empathy with their values extends even to an understanding of their suspicion of her romance with Kinsella, which they believe to be adulterous. However, Stockley departs from conventional representations of imperial patriotism not only in the general way noted by Chennells, but also in that her new Rhodesian nation has space for the improper feminine. Mrs. Rockwood, excluded from the circle of feminine patriotism in the

laager because of a sexual scandal, nonetheless proves herself, in the course of the narrative, to be a model of patriotism.

However, Deirdre's penetrative fantasy of escape from the domesticated felines introduces her to a far more formidable feminine force – the “Claw” of the African continent.

The African Family Romance

Conventionally, in the fictional deployment of colonial discourse, the colonised territory is represented as a virgin waiting to be penetrated or embraced. Africa, however, often appeared as a predatory, alluring and dark, exotic woman. (As mentioned in chapter 4, Kipling's image in his poem “South Africa”, was possibly influential in this regard, as were Haggard's powerful images of African women [Rudyard Kipling's Verse 207]). These images of the landscape are closely implicated with the construction of national and imperial identities in Africa. One would expect that the explicit gendering of these discourses would prevent women such as Stockley from relating to the idea of the nation in the same way that men do. Echoing the Oedipal scenario, the heroic romance considers it improper for daughters to desire the motherland, they are instead expected to identify themselves with her. This identification takes place in many of Stockley's and Page's romances, where the natalist discourses transform the heroines of the novels into “mothers of the nation”. An alternative identification with an eroticised landscape removes the heroines somewhat from the “chaste” and “maternal” ideal of feminine propriety. In Stockley's writing there is evidence to suggest that, as often happens in the family romance, Oedipalisation (or the weaning of imperial daughters from their masculine identification and sexualised desire for union with the motherland) is not always entirely successful. Stockley's novels allow her white female heroines to participate in the passionate romance between British hero and African continent

(from which writers like Haggard exclude them) by two techniques, one heterosexual, one homosexual.

In the heterosexual model, the heroines are so closely identified with the landscape that Africa's attractions and powers mingle and overlap with their own, thus intensifying rather than competing with their charms. In the homosexual model, the heroine herself identifies with the enslaved British hero, and, like him, becomes chained to her passion for a sexualised and cruel feminine landscape. While both moments exist in Stockley's fiction, the first (heterosexual) option is found more frequently. In Page's writing, the heterosexual option is commonplace, but is never explicitly connected to the image of the black woman, who appears in her fiction only as an object of derision. The homosexual option is certainly never encountered in Page.

The unstable position of the patriotic feminine subject in relation to the romanticised landscape is apparent from the following passage, where Deirdre finds herself "succumbing", upon arrival in Africa, to the charms of a feminised landscape:

Then suddenly the heat was over, the flare died out of the picture, the far-off kops turned a faint pink colour, and the grimness of the bush was blurred in a drapery of purple chiffon. At once night unsheathed her velvet wings, and darkness fell in dim purple veils, embroidered with silver stars. Some subtle scent, as of flowering trees growing by a river, blew through the tent of the cart. The world seemed filled with gracious dimness, and made up of illimitable lovely space. An indescribable feeling of happy freedom filled my heart (11).

Seduced by the landscape, Deirdre's feelings echo those of Kinsella, her future lover, who has told her about his passion for the continent, and his helplessness in the face of the "lure of Africa":

He had spoken of Africa as she, and with a mingled hatred and love that conjured up to my mind a vision of some false, beautiful vampire, who dragged men to her, and fastened her claws into their hearts for ever he was talking of the veldt as tenderly as a lover might talk of the woman he loves. I could only listen

eagerly to him talking about Africa like a lover. At least I felt that was the way I should like my lover to speak of me (11-12).

Thus the initial moment of desire for Africa (where Deirdre “succumbs” to Africa’s charms) is succeeded, after the mediation of the male hero, by a moment of identification with the continent – “that was the way I should like my lover to speak of me”. Deirdre identifies with Africa’s cruelty and beauty, both of which have the power to entrap the hero. (In the short story, “Wild Honey”, the male lover’s caresses are the proxy by which the female African continent embraces the heroine – the hero kisses the heroine “with kisses that were as fierce and tender and cruel as Africa herself” [103]).

Soon Deirdre’s relationship with Africa shifts as she herself becomes a victim of the sorrows and passions of life in Rhodesia. She notices the signs on Rhodesians which signify their masochistic subjection to the continent: “the claw-marks that the witch Africa put upon those who dwell in her bosom ... the scars of her fierce embrace” (67). She herself is unable to escape this embrace and adopts an attitude of unreasoning faith, the “hope” which inaugurates her into the Rhodesian community: “If I had read aright the witch’s symbol then I too was of the initiated” (67). She cannot escape the sadistic bonds of her love for Africa: “Africa will make sure. She has a way of making it worth one’s while to stay with her. And if she loves you she will just put you in bonds and keep you, whether you will or no” (75). She believes Kinsella dead, and Dick has died. Deirdre imagines these deaths to be the price of her transgression into Africa’s “wild secret places”:

Mocking and gay I had come to the cave of the witch, and now she clawed me to her and held me tight in her bosom with the hands of my dead (171).

The dead hands which now hold Deirdre are those of Kinsella and Dick, but also of all the other men who died in the war:

they held me too, though they were hands no longer, but pale bones on the brown earth; they held me fast like the hands of dead brothers, and I could never leave the land where they lay ... I could never leave this cruel land that had robbed me of those I loved, and given me instead a bitter peace and a strange contentment in her wild, barren, beauty (171).

Later Work: Passionate Innocence Triumphs Over Mutilated Malice

Stockley's early ambivalences about femininity tend to crystallise in her later work to a more straightforward opposition between innocent heroine and evil villainess. A mutilation (or grotesque transformation) of the villainess takes place in most of the novels, and is an essential moment in the differentiation between proper and improper femininity. In a reversal of her earlier criticism of "cutting" domestic femininity, Stockley, in her later work, has adopted the role of the domestic woman – by guarding the realm of the proper, and by performing the ritual "cut" which excludes transgressive femininity from society.

In Stockley's novel, *Tagati*, the heroine, Felicia Lissell, is entirely innocent of Virginia's brand of venomous femininity. Her passionate nature is entirely under control, as is symbolised by her concealment of her real name, "Appassionata". Feminine venom now belongs exclusively to the villainess, Stella Cardross, who poisons her aunt and her husband, and attempts to similarly dispose of Felicia herself. Stella is compared to a "cat" or a "mamba", while Felicia, considerably less potent, is a mere "canary" or "chicken" (390). Stella's eventual fate turns out to be the grotesque death of suicide by cyanide poisoning. As she swallows the cyanide, Stella's male companion notes the withering of her beauty: "his quick glance into her lovely eyes was just in time to catch the spasm of agony that lit them as her face curled and shrivelled like a leaf in flame" (411).

In the short story "The Leopard", the heroine, Gay Liscannon, is unevenly matched against a villainess cut from the same pattern as Stella, in this case she is the

malicious and beautiful Marice Harding. Marice is disposed of, however, by a leopard attack, which scars her throat and cheek and destroys her beauty:

The face set on the long, ravaged throat, once so subtly alluring, had turned hawklike and cruel, It seemed shrivelled, too, and between the narrow linen bandages she still wore, it had the cunning malice of some bird of prey peering from a barred cage (125).

Disfigured by the avenging “claw” of Africa, Marice becomes one with it – a “hyena that has missed its prey” (127).

Similar contests take place in several of Stockley’s other novels. In Perilous Women, the heroine, Peril Kelly, has to confront, despite her “girlhood, her simplicity, and inexperience”, the powers of a mature femininity (“the guile, the charm, the dazzle of a siren”) in the person of the villainess, Doria Heseltine (118). However, Peril succeeds in rescuing the hero, Punch Heseltine, from Doria’s clutches, and Stockley repeats the by now familiar mutilation of the ruined and disempowered villainess:

The face that stared back at her showed like a crumbled ruin behind the veil of paint; base passion and ignoble defeat had stamped it indelibly; never again might it stir the hearts of men, nor repudiate its forty-eight years of existence (130).

Similar moments also occur in the stories, “Three Farms” and “Suicide Season”.

In Kraal Baby, Stockley’s distance from her earlier, positive representations of transgressive feminine sexuality is apparent. In Poppy, the heroine is on a ship sailing to London. She is pregnant, unmarried, refuses an abortion, and does not contact the father of the child, preferring to make her way in the world alone. In Kraal Baby, the unmarried Kitsi is on her way to Paris for an abortion, and, goaded on by her villainous mother, she attempts to trap the innocent hero into marrying her.

The Return of the Improper Feminine

Although Stockley's later novels construct a progressively more patriotic and domesticated femininity, her villainesses preserve the feared elements of femininity throughout her oeuvre. The powerful discourses of feminine cruelty and sexuality which are found in Virginia and Poppy are occasionally resurrected in the personae of her more ambivalently sketched heroines and in certain gothic short stories. Stockley re-identifies the African continent with the powers of the passionate woman in her stories "Dalla the Lion Cub" and its sequel The Leopard in the Bush. Stockley's Boer heroine, Dalla, is nicknamed "the Lion Cub" because, lost on the veld, she was adopted by a pride of lions. Here Stockley equates her heroine with the forces previously personified as "the Claw". Although her passionate identity as Boer woman and child of nature acquire a veneer of style and sophistication after her extensive travels in Europe, Dalla remains a dangerously passionate creature. She effectively repels Barend de Beer, her first husband (when he makes amorous advances) by scratching his face "from eye to chin" (167). Her romance with the British hero, Valentia, takes off when she saves him from a lion attack. The lion runs away when it sees her, although not before inflicting serious wounds on Valentia's chest and face. Dalla, with her "virgin look of undiscovered country", embodies both the threat and the promise of Africa – which Valentia's uncompromising British masculinity cannot fully master (286). The novella ends with foreboding as they baptise their love in Valentia's blood: "They kissed through the blood that smothered his lips" (287).

In the sequel, The Leopard in the Bush, Valentia, though a hunter "ranking with Selous", is bested by the Lion-Cub (14). His coolly undemonstrative British nature and aversion to public spectacle lead him to desert Dalla for a long hunting trip into the wilderness, during which period Dalla's passionate nature leads her to indulge in all manners of excess, including extravagant parties, and wild picnics in the deep

shafts of gold mines. Her negligence and delight in destruction eventually lead to the death of their son in a fire which also destroys their mansion and Valentia's precious collection of hunting trophies, guns and ivories. On the night of this fire, Dalla appears in a costume which expresses her identification with the powers and dangers of the African continent:

[Dalla] was discovered in a golden tiger-skin, sewn closely round her, the black bars circling her exquisite body, the tail trailing the floor. Patently she had nothing on but the skin, her legs were bare from the knees, her feet sandalled, her beautiful face with its great tawny eyes emerged strangely savage from under the grim head-piece worn as a sort of hood (159-160).

After the death of her son, Dalla tastes the "ashes of repentance" (226), and in penitence for her sins, becomes a Catholic, nurses prisoners, and eventually becomes a nurse in the Great War, where she is reunited with a maimed Valentia.

Stockley's gothic short stories derive their narrative pleasure from the presence of the "horrific" aspects of femininity. In "Blue Aloes", the mercenary, libidinous and infanticidal Mrs van Cannan is exposed as a "white negress" and hunted down by Richard Saltire, the British hero. In "Rosanne Ozanne" the mercenary and vengeful qualities of the heroine are attributed to the influence of her Malay foster-mother, and disappear with the death of the Malay woman. In both these stories qualities disallowed in the white domestic heroine are displaced onto black women.⁴

Most significant, however, are the fears revealed by the story "The Mollmeit of the Mountain". In this story, a young British governess is left to defend a farmhouse, during a war with the Basotho. She is alone on the farm with the wife and child of the farmer, an Englishman. They have ammunition, but they run out of food, and it seems that they will soon be forced to surrender to the enemy. However, instead of committing suicide or bravely defending the child, as one would expect the ideal woman of empire to do, the governess is found to have staved off starvation by killing

the mother and making a curried stew from the child. Although the governess has disappeared, the body of the farmer's wife is discovered, and the "charred skull and thigh bones" of the child are eventually "raked out of the ashes in the fireplace" (156).

The men who come to rescue the governess are horrified by such a grotesque travesty of the qualities of femininity and domesticity. The governess has melodramatically refused to obey the injunctions of her sex and profession, which require women to be of service to others and to sacrifice themselves in the cause of the survival of others - the men respond vengefully to the notion of a "mother's help who in so hideous a fashion had helped herself" (156).

Stockley's story extends her unveiling of the domestic woman to an implicit comment on the sinister underside of colonialism's domesticating mission. After her induction to cannibalism, the governess, in the guise of a nun, sets up a school for coloured children, and periodically preys on her pupils for the juicy morsels which satisfy her appetite for human flesh. As a traitor to womanhood in general, and to imperial Christian womanhood in particular, she is eventually exposed and burned to death.

Conclusion

The "improper feminine" in Stockley's text is thus produced by the avoidance of the sentimentalising discourses of domesticity, and by discursive borrowings from a variety of traditions and genres, most notably from the novel of sensation, from the decadents, and from the heroic romance. These "improper" images, shifting points of view, and oscillating identifications, linked through the novel of sensation to "low discursive forms" (Pykett 199) such as working class melodrama and sensational journalism, were undoubtedly the reasons that the representatives of bourgeois Rhodesia branded Stockley's representations as unpatriotic. Nonetheless, given the

explicitly racialised, and class-specific positioning of Stockley's "improper feminine", it is hard to read her narratives, (as Pykett does for sensation fiction) as containing the repressed trace of a "feminine libidinal economy of writing" (208).

Certainly, however, the hybridity of genre and the discursive mimicry particularly apparent in Stockley's writing can, in the manner of sensation fiction, be read as an interpretation from a margin, as a displaced utterance of a hegemonic form, or as an attempt "to appropriate and transform the subject-matter and styles of fiction, and to extend the possibilities of particular genres beyond their culturally ascribed limits" (Pykett 207).

¹ The poem from which this epigraph is taken is entitled "The Ladies" in which Kipling presents a jocular and repentant colonial man who has "tried" women of all races and nationalities, and has, in the process come to understand femininity (Rudyard Kipling's Verse).

² The painter Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833-1898) was influenced by pre-Raphaelites such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and William Morris. Stockley's references to Burne-Jones eyes suggest the deeply shadowed features (borrowed from Rossetti's paintings) which are a repeated convention in Burne-Jones's paintings of women. Aubrey Beardsley's controversial images of "new" women in his Yellow Book sketches are discussed in detail by Bridget Elliott (1987).

³ Poppy, like Stockley is not brought up by her own mother. Her foster-family is ruled by Aunt Lena Kennedy, who has married Poppy's good-looking but "weak" second cousin "Uncle Bob" (7). Like Stockley herself, Poppy grows up in Fountain Street, Bloemfontein, the children of the foster-family are given names reminiscent of Stockley's own step-brothers and sister: Georgie, Tommy, and Emily.

⁴ This is in accordance with the general tendency noted by, among others, Dorothy Driver: "indigenous women have functioned to keep white women 'pure' and to help define them as less 'other'" (15).

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