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The Mimic Women: Early Women Novelists and White Southern African Nationalisms

Anthony Chennels*

In the African nationalist politics of the 1950s and 1960s, Fanon's title *Black Skin, White Masks* became an aphorism for the crisis of racial confidence that Europe's denigration of Africa's cultures had induced.[1] As independence became a possibility or was achieved, the phrase became a slogan within the politics of cultural nationalism: mimicry of the colonial master had obscured the true selves of Africa which would be uncovered only by casting aside colonialism's multiple disguises. For Fanon, however, there was no true self, no essential identity. All identities are provisional on the contingencies of history and no originary pristine African identity waits to be recovered on the far side of colonial history. Fanon thought dialectically and he understood identity to be mutable, deriving from how we act in and on history. Even if colonialism rewards the colonized for assuming masks, they are masks that transform and the selves that appear when the colonized discard their masks are not the selves that were there when the masks were assumed. For the purposes of this article, the metaphors of both masking and mimicry will be examined, by noting that masking is never so successful that a mask is not recognized as a disguise and that mimicry allows both the mimicking medium and the voice or gesture that is being mimicked to be simultaneously recognizable. What matters is the motive for masking or why the voice of another is being assumed.

In *A Dying Colonialism*, Frantz Fanon recalls how the French in Algeria sought to draw Algerian women towards French modernity by unveiling them. Paradoxically, this attempt "to make [the women] an ally in [France's] work of cultural destruction … had the effect of strengthening the traditional patterns of behavior."[2] Wearing the veil defied the power of the colonizer to make all things new. When the Algerian war started, another problem arose. If women remained behind their veils and within the "protective mantle of the Kasbah, the almost organic curtain of safety that the Arab town weaves around the native,[3]" they could not serve the revolution and the radical woman had to learn to put aside the veil as mode of resistance. The French colonizer regarded the veiled woman as a passive sexual object; the Algerian man saw the unveiled woman as a loose woman. Veiled she mimics the Algerian ideal of a woman true to her culture;

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* Anthony Chennells retired at the end of 2002 from the University of Zimbabwe where he was Associate Professor of English He is Extraordinary Professor of English at the University of Pretoria and also teaches part time at the Arrupe College Jesuit School of Humanities and Philosophy in Harare and the University of California at Santa Cruz His current research interests include the application of post-colonial theories to Zimbabwean settler literature

1 F Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, translated by C L Markmann (Grove Press, New York, 1982)

2 F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism,* translated by H Chevalier (Grove Press, New York, 1965), p 49

3 Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, p 51

unveiled she mimics the indecently free Western woman. The revolutionary woman has to locate her body within the revolution:

> She must consider the image of the occupier lodged somewhere in her mind and in her body, remodel it, initiate the essential work of eroding it, make it inessential, remove something of the shame that is attached to it, devalidate it [4]

As she moves unveiled through the white city, the French soldiers see her as someone who is on their side. They read mimicry as collaboration, not realizing that in her suitcase are concealed weapons and money for the revolution. For Fanon, hers is a liberating mimicry. Her bare legs, "not confined by the veil, [are] given back to themselves."[5] This is more than a transformation of only the Algerian woman. Rumours get back to the father that friends have seen his daughter walking unveiled like a whore and he demands explanations. Instead of shame, the father is faced with "the young girl's look of firmness" and as the family realizes that something of greater consequence than family dishonour is at stake, they rally behind their daughter and sister. "Behind the girl, the whole family – even the Algerian father, the authority for all things, the founder of every value – following in her footsteps, becomes committed to the new Algeria."[6] The apparent mimic is now leader. The story does not end there. The French become wise to the motives for unveiling. Soon the patrols are searching all women veiled or unveiled and since the women know that it is easier to conceal weapons under the veil than in Western dress, they once again assume the veil. But it is not the same veil. It is, writes Fanon, "stripped once and for all of its exclusively traditional dimension."[7] The women have variously mimicked the idea of a culturally authentic woman; the idea of a modern woman in colonial discourse; the idea of a loose woman in traditional discourse; and once again the idea of a traditional woman. In each case, however, what bare face or veiled face signifies for the woman has little connection with how they signify in either traditional or colonial discourse.

Mimicry as a subversion of existing locations of power has been complexly theorized since Fanon wrote. Michael Taussig in *Mimesis and Alterity* argues that while mimesis draws attention to similarity and alterity to difference, they are not opposed concepts. Using Marcel Mauss's claim that the economy of the gift involves exchanges of objects of equivalent value in order to maintain the appearance of equality between individuals, Taussig argues that it is in this way that there is an "intimate bond between the spirit of the gift and the spirit of the mime."[8] Where poverty mimics wealth as it does in carnival for example, the emphasis is at least partly on similarity rather than difference even if the similarity lies only in a fantasy of potential. But mimicry soon goes beyond the idea of gifts as a series of equivalent exchanges. A degree of similarity must be apparent in mimicry but neither mimicker nor mimicked may desire the resemblance. Fanon's Algerian woman whether she is mimicking the traditional or the collaborationist woman wants to be neither. Taussig observes:

> Once the mimetic has sprung into being, a terrifically ambiguous power is established; there is born the power to represent the world, yet that same power is a power to falsify, mask and pose The two powers are inseparable [9]

4 Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, p 52
5 Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, p 58
6 Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, p 60
7 Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, p 63
8 M Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (Routledge, London and New York, 1993), p 93
9 Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, pp 42-43

Homi Bhabha regards this ambiguity as a necessary aspect of colonialism. On the one hand, the colonial state seeks to discipline and control; on the other it justifies its presence because it is inserting the colonized into a progressive world order. Citing Edward Said, Bhabha identifies "the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination – the demand for identity and stasis – and the counter-pressure of the diachrony of history – change, difference." Mimicry is the "*ironic* compromise" between these two contradictory states.[10] The irony derives from colonialism's attempt to perpetuate two states both of which are desirable but both of which contradict one another. The colonized must be perpetually subordinate and yet at the same time imperialism justifies its activities by offering the colonized the chance to exchange savage stasis or oriental decadence – it is largely immaterial how the alterity of the colonized is characterized – for progress. On one level the colonizer demands that the colonized reproduces the higher way which colonialism has offered; on another level the colonized must always remain "*a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite*."[11] Fanon's Algerian woman revolutionaries, depending on their costume, are almost the same as the subservient, veiled, culturally authentic woman or almost the same as the loose woman who has turned her back on sexual conventions but not quite. Mimicry ceases to be if equivalence through total resemblance is achieved but within the colonial situation total resemblance is as impossible as it is undesired. "[I]n order to be effective," Bhabha observes, "mimicry must always produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."[12] This ambivalence is doubly disruptive. Mimicry denies the absolute otherness that colonial domination assumes; but since the colonizing subject and colonized subject can never fuse, their eternal difference disavows the benign motives of imperialism. "The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision," Bhabha observes, "which in disclosing the ambivalence of its discourse also disrupts its authority."[13]

The theories mentioned, take as their point of departure alterities of colour which imperial discourses of racism and the opposing discourses of anti-colonial racism depend on and construct. Bhabha modifies his phrase to "*Almost the same but not white*".[14] Because within most European empires the injustices based on racial difference were egregious in comparison with the manner in which other differences were registered, we forget how the colonial-born white was for the metropole an object of prejudice at least and sometimes of contemptuous discrimination. Benedict Anderson notes that in Spain's South American empire even if someone were born within a week of his parents' migration, "the accident of birth in the Americas consigned him to subordination. ... There was nothing to be done about it: he was *irremediably* a creole."[15] Almost but not quite with a vengeance. The break with Spain gave birth to a new and aggressive local identity. Three years after the Chilean revolution, a Creole landowner sided with a native labourer against his Spanish overseer: how dare a Spaniard raise his hand against an American.[16]

The Creole claiming or indeed refusing a common identity with the home-born is perhaps an anxiety of most empires. The loss of the American colonies haunted British imperial thinking throughout the nineteenth century and there was a need to first imagine

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10 H K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, London and New York, 1994), p 86
11 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p 86
12 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p 86
13 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p 88
14 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p 89
15 B Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, London and New York, 1991), p 58
16 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p 63

and then legislate an imperial nation that would prevent settler colonies from sliding into impudent and defiant nationhood. With the Anglo-Boer War, fought in part with troops from the colonies, Britain's anxiety to conflate the home-born with the colonial-born as a single "race" became more pressing.[17] This anxiety is particularly marked in Kipling's poems of the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. Kipling realized that divided loyalties must be a necessary part of colonial settlement if only because the familiar reality of the colonial is exotic to the English-born. In "The Native Born," a familiar colonial relationship that is singularly exotic to the English born is recalled when we are enjoined to drink – the poem is an extended toast –

> To our dear dark foster-mothers,
> To the heathen songs they sung-
> To the heathen speech we babbled
> Ere we came to the white man's tongue [18]

Heathen babble represents the multiple differences of empire while English is a unifying medium to which the colonial has as much right as does the "home"-born. The white man's tongue signifies maturity that the empire allows the colonial to acquire, however distant he is from its pure source. In "The Deep-Sea Cables," one of the poems from "A Song of the English," the technology of the cables carrying English words is written as a power that orders primordial chaos:

> They have wakened the timeless Things; they have killed their father Time;
> Joining hands in the gloom, a league from the last of the sun
> Hush! Men talk to-day o'er the waste of the ultimate slime,
> And a new Word runs between: whispering, "Let us be one!"[19]

There is no need for mimicry here: the rulers of empire possess a common tongue that is also the language of Kipling's poetry. In the "Song of the Sons," however, an obstinate difference remains as the colonials assert themselves and their way of speaking:

> Mother, be proud of thy seed!
> Count, are we feeble or few? Hear, is our speech so rude?
> Look, are we poor in the land? Judge are we men of The Blood?[20]

Awkwardly for the poem's larger argument, men of the blood speak a differently accented English. It is not only the native-born but the English themselves who have difficulty in seeing nation and empire as inseparable and in making common cause with colonials. In "The English Flag," Kipling attacks the national myopia of the home-born English by making them part of a London fog:

> And what should they know of England who only England know?-
> The poor little street-bred people that vapour and fume and brag… [21]

17 A Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1994), pp 37-38

18 *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition 1885-1926* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1927), p 192

19 "The Deep-Sea Cables," *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, p 173

20 "The Song of the Sons," *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, p 174

21 "The English Flag: 1891," *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, p 218

What do the wraiths of the motherland have in common with their sturdy colonial brothers and sisters? “Almost but not quite” has become “not at all like” and to create a common heritage incorporated in a common speech, in this poem the language of empire is spoken not in a harmony of English and colonial voices but by the four winds that testify to England’s greatness by witnessing to the flag’s ubiquity. The winds recall England’s heroic history but that narrative serves merely to mask England’s indifference to its empire, the colonials’ complaint that the English do not understand them,[22] and the absence of a shared destiny for the various people of the empire. Invariably Kipling’s metaphors of unity attempt to address what current jargon might call a breakdown of communication. In the final poem of the “A Song of the English” group, “England’s Answer,” the Mother Land characterizes her relationship with her sons as:

> Deeper than speech our love, stronger than life our tether,
> But we do not fall on the neck nor kiss when we come together

And she commands them:

> Ay, talk to your grey mother that bore you on her knees!-
> That ye may talk together, brother to brother’s face-
> Thus for the good of your peoples – thus for the Pride of the Race

When they do get talking, Kipling’s anxiety that empire will dissolve through indifference is not allayed. The mother country recognizes that “the Law that ye make shall be law after the rule of your lands” and if each land creates its own rule, the practical concerns that bind together the people of empire remain unspoken:

> The Law that ye make shall be law and I do not press my will,
> Because ye are Sons of The Blood and call me Mother still
> Now must ye speak to your kinsmen and they must speak to you,
> After the use of the English, in straight flung words and few [23]

Blood and language are all that the Sons share and language whether it is speech or gesture is hardly an effective source of unity since the men of the imperial nation seem to be both inarticulate and emotionally inhibited. The negotiations of mimicry are beyond them since they have confidence only in their own voices.

Empires are concerned with centres and peripheries and Kipling is far better at imaging the peripheries than he is at imagining the centre. To make London worthy of its rich margins is an imaginative and therefore a poetic problem and in “The Native Born,” Kipling draws home, shared national narrative, trade, personal advantage, banking and commerce into a sacramental sovereignty represented by Westminster Abbey:

> To the hearth of Our People’s People-
> To her well-ploughed windy sea,
> To the hush of our dread high-altar
> Where the Abbey makes us We
> To the grist of the slow-ground ages,
> To the gain that is yours and mine-
> To the Bank of the Open Credit,
> To the Power-house of the Line![24]

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22 “We’ve drunk to our English brother,
(But he does not understand) ” “The Native Born,” *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, p 190

23 “England’s Answer,” *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, p 177

24 “The Native Born,” *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, p 192

Breathless as those lines are, they more accurately reflect the multiple concerns of empire than the Mother, Sons and Brothers that provide the organizing metaphors for so many of Kipling's other imperial poems. As an heir of Carlyle and Ruskin, Kipling admired the technology that accompanied empire and the late Victorian technocrat is one of his heroes, but like Carlyle and Ruskin, he refused to allow the practical to be its own reward: it had to be transformed as an ideal. Empire as a money-making concern could not be the last word on the subject and, like Haggard, for Kipling a sordid taint hangs over imperial wealth. The mask that is assumed in these poems is a mask of idealism signified in the only grammatical subject of that stanza and the only active verb: "the Abbey makes us We." The Abbey's high altar acknowledges the one power greater than the British empire and as the site of the coronation, the bestowal of divine authority on empire is ritually enacted there. We are not only very rich but as children of empire we are, as St Paul says of a different reality, a new creation.

Early Rhodesian male writers, especially those that were born in England, had few illusions about colonial loyalty to England. Having experienced Rhodesians at first hand, they were unable to delude themselves with Kipling's masking idealism. In Cullen Gouldsbury's *God's Outpost* which was published in 1907, the English protagonist registers contempt for the

> [i]rritable veldt-bred Colonials, always on the *qui-vive* for some fancied aloofness on the part of the "darned Englishman" Truly, did we but realize it, the chain that links the sentiments of the colonies to the Mother Country is but the veriest gossamer [25]

Gouldsbury at least allows the colonial his or her subjectivity even if it involves a dislike of the English. Stanley Portal Hyatt is more typical of the English-born novelist in his unremitting contempt for colonials. In *The Land of Promises*, he attributes the character defects in a native commissioner to his belonging to an old Natal family, "which showed in a certain predilection for Boer words and customs, including inter-marriage and the procreation of congenital idiots."[26] In the same novel, a colonial asks what an Englishman means by the curse of Africa and he is told that he is "one of the results of it."[27] The danger of receding to the level of the colonial is an ever-present threat to the English in these novels. Hyatt explains that it is hardly surprising that whites should degenerate in an environment where "the process of evolution has produced nothing but a black savage of a low type."[28]

Hyatt was a writer of imperial romances and he could afford to look with contempt at colonials. The narrative of the male-authored imperial romance typically traces a journey from England to and from the exotic place so that England is the journey's literal and ideological end. The dominant tropes of the narrative are violence against an indigenous people, the search for treasure and the toughening of the travelers, both physically and morally. Since the ideological trajectory of the narrative is imperial, both the treasure and their newly-honed masculinity will enrich England. In Rhodesia, the settler colony as earnest of a new nation, demanded a greater commitment from the women writers than it did from their male counterparts. The women had to confront the particular problems of creating a new nation which metropolitan wisdom decreed would inevitably be marked

25 C Gouldsbury, *God's Outpost* (Eveleigh Nash, London, 1907), p 36
26 S P Hyatt, *The Land of Promises* (T Werner Laurie, London, s a [1911]), p 130
27 Hyatt, *The Land of Promises*, p 147
28 Hyatt, *The Land of Promises*, p 285

by evolutionary regression. For the colonial-born woman author the problem was even more acute. By being born out of England, she was like Anderson's Creole, irremediably inferior and doubly disabled as she was by birth and gender, it could be asked what authority she invoked in order to author a novel.

One of the contexts of the first twenty years of Rhodesia was the agitation in Britain for women's suffrage. Antoinette Burton shows that one powerful argument against extending the vote to women was that they could possess no authority over rough colonials or people of colour locked into patriarchal systems.[29] Lord Curzon who headed the Anti-Suffrage League argued that "For the discharge of great responsibilities in the dependencies of the Empire in distant parts you want the qualities not of the feminine but of the masculine mind."[30] If Britain's colonials are, as Kipling claimed, men who do not "fall on the neck nor kiss when [they] come together," Almroth Wright was correct in arguing that votes for women would enervate the empire: "There cannot be two opinions to the question that a virile and imperial race will not brook any attempt at control by women." [31] Since the suffrage workers were confronted by arguments like these that saw the nation as an imperial nation, Burton argues that women asking for the vote had to demonstrate that they could play a role not only at home but in empire as well.

In Rhodesia, this role was clearly to help to give form to the founder's dreams. From the beginning of his seeking a royal charter for his company, Rhodes conceived of the company's territories as a settler colony that would become home to a new branch of the English race. Women were there as the bearers of sons and daughters for the new country. If men wrote imperial romances that told of the violence needed to make the land safe for this new domesticity, women writers had to author narratives that served a literally creative purpose. Their responsibility was to provide the narratives that would legitimise the birth of a new nation and in the cacophony of multiple and competing voices they had to command a voice that spoke with authority even if that involved mimicking other voices.

The Rhodesian-authored novel that deals most consciously with mimicry is Cynthia Stockley's best-selling *Poppy The Story of a South African Girl* which was published in 1910, the year of Union. Cynthia Stockley was born of Irish parents in Bloemfontein, Ireland and the Orange Free State, placing her at two removes from the British metropole.[32] At the beginning of the novel Poppy Destin, the eponymous heroine, is an orphan child of Irish immigrants, beaten, starved and neglected by her aunt. At the end of the book, marriage has transformed her into Lady Carson and she is travelling with her Irish baronet husband, who has been appointed administrator of the new British colony of Borapota in Central Africa. Sir Evelyn Carson is the ideal imperial hero who has fought in all of Britain's African wars, including the invasion of Matabeleland. The conventions of the imperial romance are intact here and an imperial fairy tale with Poppy/Lady Carson as a colonial Cinderella confirms rather than contradicts the ideologies promoted by the male-authored romance.

Stockley is much more alert to empire's multiple and unresolved identities than my summary allows. Her husband's title has made Poppy "her ladyship", but the glamour of a baronetcy has to contend with the degradation of the South African girl of the subtitle which is inscribed by South African racism and the irresolvable antagonisms between

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29 Burton, *Burdens of History*, pp 12-19
30 Quoted *in* Burton, *Burdens of History*, p 13
31 Quoted *in* Burton, *Burdens of History*, p 14
32 C Stockley, *Poppy: The Story of a South African Girl* (Hurst and Blackett, London, s a [1910])

Boer and Briton. The imperial or any other romance as an inadequate aesthetic for the divided loyalties of colonial Southern Africa is anticipated near the beginning of *Poppy*. The child tries to distance herself from her aunt's house by plotting in her mind new tales of Lancelot and some lovely woman but these stories are never completed. Her aunt invariably interrupts her composition, demanding that she perform chores which the novel designates as "Kaffir's work," spreading dung on the floor or playing nursemaid to her cousins. Poppy's South Africa is crowded with blacks, Boers and English-speaking colonials. Difference from these is a grace or more precisely grace abounds if the colonial can mark her difference from the Boer since the difference from blacks is self-evident. Only through mimicry is Poppy able to register that saving difference.[33] While living in bondage to her aunt, the child "detects the difference in the language of her [English-born] teachers and that of her aunt ... and she learned to use her voice as they did too - softly and low - never speaking the half-Dutch, half-English patter" of her aunt and cousins. "'Och, what?' 'Hey?' and 'Sis!'" When she is overheard, practicing the English of her teachers, "fresh sneers [are] thrown at her. 'Was she going daft then? ... speaking to herself like a crazed Hottentot ... the lunatic asylum was her place'".[34] The novel invites us to register as ironic the colonial ignorance that hears such mimicry of middle-class English voices as the madness of the people whom racist theories placed near the lowest level of South Africa's many racial orders.

If the colonial woman cannot understand the desirability of an English accent, the men in the novel certainly do. One of these men, Bramham, who is the centre of male moral consciousness in the novel, pronounces firmly, "'Colonial girls don't interest me at any time,'" even when they are good-looking.[35] Bramham is born in Natal and his contempt for colonials does not extend to himself because in the imperial romance men obtain an identity through action that can transcend the taint of colonial birth. Women are denied that transcendence. When Carson and Poppy meet for the first time and make love, his voice has "a note of disappointment in it" as he registers surprise at her confession that she is African-born, a confession that confers a purity on their love-making since this is the one occasion in the book when her role is cast aside.[36] The love-making and the conception of her child is a sacred moment in which like speaks to like in total truthfulness.

Australian, New Zealand and Canadian fiction signal the transition from settler colony to new nation by refusing to apologise for colonial difference registered in colonial speech. Southern African literature is much more anxious at differences between English-speaking whites and the English-born. When novels and travel journals rehearse Africa's diseases, as well as often fatal encounters with savage people and wild animals, they are extending metonymically what Hyatt saw as Africa's subtle threat to whites: their regression in evolutionary time. One way of dealing with this threat is to attempt to replicate in Africa the trappings of English upper-class life as a sort of inoculation against the contagion of racial degeneracy. Poppy escapes from her aunt's house, re-names herself Lucy Grey and after wandering for several days in the veld, is taken in by a wealthy man, Luce Abinger. A veld-Gothic forwards the principal narrative. Luce

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33 In Stockley's *Dalla the Lion Cub: A Story of South Africa* (G P Putnam's Sons, New York and London, 1924), p 29, Dalla Brand wants to learn to speak English in order "'to sneer back in their own polite language at those women- and *that man*'" who have been speaking contemptuously about Afrikaners This may be Stockley's response to the anti-Afrikaner propaganda that helped to swing the Rhodesian settler vote against Union in 1922

34 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 23

35 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 123

36 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 133

marries her in a ceremony conducted by a French Jesuit whose import she does not understand as she is required only to say "*Oui*" at Luce's prompting. He educates her, takes her on his travels through Europe and America until she can pass herself off as an upper-class English girl and that is what she is assumed to be when she returns to Luce's house in Durban whose decorative details, furnishings and books reflect the taste of the late-Victorian English upper-classes.

An illusion of English sophistication is present in the house but its Southern African context is only too real. The front gate of Luce's garden is kept permanently locked but Poppy can walk freely if she chooses to leave through the black servant's quarters or secretly through a gap in the hedge which leads into the next-door garden where a colonial girl lives by herself. These three spaces are offered as possibilities in the life of any Southern African colonial woman. Luce may be a villain, but he is English-born and marriage to him will allow Poppy to access the power which the metropole confers on its sons: the grace to cleanse her from her colonial birth. All that is required to unlock the front gate is that she agrees that their secret marriage be made public. If marriage to Luce is unthinkable, movement through the gate used by black servants is equally repugnant since it suggests that marriage has placed her in the same subordinate relationship to Luce that race has placed blacks to whites. The use of the secret entrance is problematic in its own way, as it seems to confirm that she is after all only a colonial girl. Although Poppy "strongly repudiate[s] further association with the Colonial girl," she regretfully recognizes that "through Sophie's garden must lie her only way into the world beyond".[37] Her choices are between a marriage that provides an assured metropolitan identity, "going native" or opting for the hybridity that is hers by virtue of her birth.

Poppy, like Stockley herself, has to accept the last option. However successful her mimicry of the English-born has been, she suffers the fate of any mimic: "almost but not quite" and from that space where the slippage of difference can be seen, the Poppy of most of the novel emerges. She plays at being English while manipulating South Africa with the privileged knowledge of the South African-born. An English woman refers to her colonial acquaintances as "cabbages" and speaks of Durban as a "cabbage patch". "'*You're* no Durbanite. *You* don't grow in the cabbage garden,'" she tells Poppy.[38] Although Poppy accepts the compliment, the most important of her several re-namings is Rosalind Chard, a yoking together of English rose and colonial cabbage, and it is by this name she is known throughout most of the novel. This hybridity, however, is repudiated throughout the novel with metaphors that affirm an alternative African identity. She distances herself from Kipling's imperial mother by personifying Africa as mother. "'Old Mother Africa!...I am a poppy growing in your old brown bosom. You are the only mother I have ever known'" is typical of the use of sentimental metaphor to evade the multiply dislocated identity of any white-born in Africa.[39] In Southern African novels at this date, home invariably means England even for the colonial-born. Poppy notes of a Durban drawing-room that its taste comes from: "[o]nly a few well-arranged native curios, a good piano, and the kind of things people from home gather about them when they are sojourning in a foreign land".[40] At the end of *Poppy,* however, home meaning England is placed in inverted commas.[41] When Poppy tells Abinger's coloured maid of her travels she dwells on homesickness:

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37 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 157
38 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 167
39 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 130
40 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 174
41 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 340

"As soon as I got out of sight of Africa [my roots] began to pull and hurt [I]t always came upon me worst in cities I used to be sick with longing for a glimpse of the big open spaces with nothing in view but land and sea In Paris and London I couldn't bear to go to the big open parks for fear the sickness would come upon me "[42]

The dependence of the South African white on black labour complicates the conventional trope of Africa's emptiness in which whites have made a home. Poppy recalls her frustration in America at finding African Americans to be

"cheats and frauds for I was always waiting to hear some Kaffir or Dutch word from their lips and they never spoke anything but mincing drawling American [A man] magnificently dressed in navy blue serge [with] a brimmer hat, looked so *exactly* like Jim Basuto who ran away from the farm that I said to him in Kaffir: 'You had better make haste and come back to the farm, Jim, and mind the sheep '"[43]

If blacks have to be, they should be in Africa and in positions of subordination. The American's response is that she is either dippy or a French actress: the illicit mimic of whiteness misreading the voice of white authority which when it speaks to blacks has no need to mimic anything since race alone gives it its authenticity. If Africa's emptiness invites creativity which only the metropole can command, the ordering which Africa's people require is at the disposal of both English and colonial-born.

One way of registering the emergence of new nations out of old colonies is the change of tone with which the former colony writes about the metropole and Stockley's manner of writing back in *Poppy* is no exception. From her childhood when she created new tales of Camelot, Poppy knows she will be a writer and she takes not only her talent to London but the unborn child, conceived from her one encounter with Evelyn Carson. A nineteenth-century convention both in literature and fact made the colony a place to which sexually transgressive woman were removed. For Poppy, the movement is from colony to metropole. If conventionally colonial exile serves to teach repentance to the fallen woman who can regain decency through marriage to a colonial man, Poppy's London tutors the transgressor only in hypocrisy. Her punishment for her transgression of what she sees as the metropole's sexual conventions is that " [o]ne's act ... bring[s] one into contact with sordid people, and squalor and vice [and] one may become degraded and soiled in spite of oneself".[44] If the imperial romance narrates a rite of passage that the English man goes through in order to become worthy of England, Poppy's rite of passage is to tear away the mask of imperial glamour concealing the metropole's hidden and sordid reality. At the heart of empire, the personal columns of the once notorious *Butterton's Weekly* offer strategies for the fallen woman to maintain the appearance of respectability.

When [Poppy] had read a few of its advertisements, nausea seized her. Was she

one of the army of these asking for *secret* and *confidential* homes? And were these homes offered by *discreet nurses* who could *get the baby adopted if desired*, meant for people like her?[45]

That the metropole stifles and debases rather than inspires and uplifts, subverts the telos of any imperial novel which must have the glorification of England as its end. Poppy

42 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 75
43 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 76
44 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 194
45 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 189

realizes that if she had stayed in Africa to have her child, she would have drawn her inspiration from black women. She thinks of

> the native women in her own land, who, when the time comes to bring forth, go quietly away to some sheltered place, and there suffer in silence and alone 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!"[46]

Absurd though that is as an account of the birthing practices of either Zulus or Basutho, the only non-fictional African people mentioned in the novel, the decentring is plain enough: "native" no longer refers exclusively to the black other when the same other is of "her own land". The shame of a bastard's birth derives from English moral conventions rather than Zulu or Sotho attitudes to motherhood and has therefore nothing to do with her as an African. Shared womanhood is privileged over race and as she nurses her son, she feels triumphant: "'I am a *real* woman,'" she says. "'This is what I was born for and made beautiful for'".[47] That the novel refuses to locate Poppy's identity in sexual transgression is unexpectedly signalled when Poppy walks past "Tite Street, thinking of the tragic genius who had made it famous and who was eating out his heart in Reading Gaol".[48] The pregnant and unmarried woman and convicted homosexual are drawn together in their literal confinement in places designed to repress their genius and register their shame.

Although these various incidents together create a coherent counter-narrative, the conventions of dominant genre, the imperial romance, are never entirely lost sight of. At her most desperate in London, Poppy chooses a house for her confinement because it is near Westminster Abbey. Even if the other women in the house "seem[] in a conspiracy to make her feel low, and shameful, when she wishe[s] only to be proud and happy," the Abbey reminds her that England and its empire point her to higher ideals than can be known by women conditioned into shame at what they see as illicit pregnancies. Her companions in the house are forgotten when from her attic-room she looks across at the Abbey:

> the stately twin pinnacles facing Palace Yard where all London goes rolling by to East and to West [I]t stood for all grand ideals! Nothing squalid there, or shameful![49]

However alien to London Stockley may make Poppy feel, her genre is so dependent on imperial ideology that having pulled aside London's imperial mask, the novel promptly replaces it in order to allow that enthusiasm. Even while South Africa and Love, its 'l' capitalized to demonstrate its force as personification, are invoked to validate her triumph as mother, the imperial mother is capable of possessing Poppy, replacing her voice with its own.

My attempts to read *Poppy* as a South African nationalist novel or alternatively as an imperial romance are complicated by the novel's emphasis on Poppy's and Carson's Irishness. One of the many insults her aunt throws at Poppy is that she is a Fenian and her gift for mimicry is explained as Ireland's gift to her. Carson, we are told, is "one of many Irishmen who have left their native land, burning with the sense of England's tyranny, only to go and strive for England's fame and glory in some other part of the

46 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 195
47 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 196
48 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 187
49 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 194

world".[50] Irish settlers in Southern Africa were never excluded from colonial or subsequent Union politics as they were in Australia for example. In the ethnicly and racially fractured societies of Southern Africa that the Irish were white, English-speaking and unlikely to sympathise with anti-Catholic, Afrikaner nationalism, combined to allow them access to political power. But in *Poppy*, Irishness is gendered. Carson's Irishness gives him an individuality and he can choose to make the Empire mean whatever he wishes. He has "discovered a new quadruped and a new tribe of natives" but refuses to allow the "Royal Institute ... to trim him up with blue ribbons and exhibit him in London".[51] "Being an Irishman, [Carson is] a law unto himself, with a fine taste for unconventionality in other people."[52] Poppy, on the other hand, as a woman cannot authorise herself:

> "Even in South Africa, women and their belongings and connections must be above-board and open to inspection An unattached woman has to prove her right to social status" [53]

The Irish man has a place in empire as an adventurer. Irish or South African birth merely confirms a woman's subordination. Since she has no English family to validate her, Ireland provides Poppy with no other resources except her ability to mimic so accurately that voice and manner suggest the probability of important English connections that it would be foolish for the socially ambitious to affront.

By the end of the novel, the dominant genre subsumes colonized Irish, the conflation of black and white women and a colonial's contempt for London. In the final chapter Sir Evelyn and Lady Carson are supervising the loading of their ship with "all the ... quantities of things needed in the great business of opening up and civilising the latest possession of the Empire ... Borapota".[54] One detail of identity remains unresolved. Poppy's confession to Carson that she is a colonial is never repeated and he seems to have forgotten it. When he marries her, he knows only that she is the notorious South African novelist, Eve Destiny, the last of Poppy's many aliases. Only to Clem Portal, a woman who has consistently befriended her, does Poppy declare what she is: "'an Irish vagabond born in Africa'".[55] and that the only weapons she has had at her disposal have been lies. Throughout her life she has played out roles. To Clem her confession is complete and even her child, who is by now conveniently dead, is mentioned. The older woman checks her confession:

> "Silence is always best my dear When a woman learns to be silent about herself, she gains power nothing else can give her And words can forge themselves into such terrible weapons to be used against one - sometimes by hands we love "[56]

And silence is what the novel provides at its end or more precisely the noise of the departure of Sir Evelyn Carson to bring Borapota to imperial heel silences the other narratives. Borapota is an ideal space and a narrative that closes in it can disclose nothing about Southern Africa's economic and social antagonisms. One silencing is made explicit. Eve Destiny will produce nothing from Borapota: "I shall never be able to write any more," says Poppy. "I can never do anything again but live."[57] It is an astonishing

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50 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 143
51 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 144
52 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 270
53 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 270
54 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 278
55 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 279
56 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 278
57 Stockley, *Poppy*, p 350

ending to a novel that as her *nom de plume* suggests has been partly about a woman liberating herself through writing. As the imperial romance assumes domination of the narrative, the woman voluntarily silences herself, her stories not merely subordinated, but erased. Stockley's final mimicry is of a male voice telling stories of male actions and it is for any white nationalist project a fatal mimicry. Not only is the woman silenced but so is the voice of the colonial, the hybrid and the voice of potential nationalism.

Although *Poppy* is set in South Africa, when it was written Stockley's reputation was as a Rhodesian novelist and in the years immediately before Union the distinction between Rhodesia and the South African colonies was not as marked as it was to become. Southern Rhodesia's settlers sent representatives to the National Conventions. The centre of consciousness of her Rhodesian novels are usually sophisticated young women who, even if they are Irish, as Deidre Saurin is in *The Claw*, recall the Ireland of Viceregal Lodge rather than the Ireland of the Fenians. The sophistication of Stockley's Rhodesian heroines is not Poppy's mimicry. They are at home in London and know Paris and usually New York: they are emphatically not colonials. Theirs is a cosmopolitan authority larger than Britain's and as able as the metropole to validate Rhodesia's aspirations to a distinct and possibly national identity. Mediation of this sort is needed if the pretensions of Rhodesians to a discrete identity are not regarded as simply absurd, for the inadequacy of the colonial is always implicitly and sometimes explicitly present. In *The Claw* when people are gossiping about Anthony Kinsella, the novel's hero, we are told that:

> He had come adventuring to South Africa when he was quite a boy, knew almost every inch of the country, and was looked upon as almost a colonial
>
> "*Almost*, but not quite," said Gerald Deshon, "he is one of us Also he is a born leader, and no colonial was ever that, though I dare say some will come along by and by as the years roll by "[58]

Almost but not quite. Bhabha's slippage, the necessary inability of the mimic to be assimilated with its subject is here the inevitable failure of the colonial-born to replicate the strengths of those whom birth has made inconvertibly English. Mimicry is the irony of an imperfect mimesis. *The Claw* is set in the imaginary Fort George in the days before, during and after the 1893 invasion of the Khumalo kingdom. Stockley was in Fort Victoria during the invasion and her brother-in-law Harry Greenfield was killed with Wilson on the Shangani. By the time Stockley wrote *The Claw,* the bungled military exercise of the Shangani Patrol no longer signified humiliating defeat, or even another incident in England's imperial wars. "Wilson's Last Stand", like Custer's, had been transformed into the blood sacrifice needed for the new nation and it is this transformation of the historic incident that the novel is partly concerned to trace.

The whites who die in the attack on Lobengula at first die for England. Deirdre remembers a poem in which death in the service of empire is celebrated as necessary a death as Christ's death on Calvary:

> O wasted dust! O senseless clay!
> Is this the end? Is this the end?
>
> Peace, peace! We wrong the noble dead
> To vex their solemn slumber so,
> Though childless and with thorn-crowned head
> Up the steep path must England go …[59]

58 C Stockley, *The Claw* (Hurst and Blackett, London, s a [1911]), p 70

This is of course from Oscar Wilde's great ode to Victoria, "Ave Imperiatrix," although Deirdre professes to have forgotten the author – something Poppy refuses to do. Instead with her brother dead and Kinsella presumed dead, Deirdre passes through her own Calvary of depression and illness until, as she is recuperating, she realizes that she belongs to Africa:

> [T]he hands of all those men with whom I had laughed in the moonlight and afterwards waved to in farewell – 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 knew at last that 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 [60]

The Claw is dedicated "To my own land" and Stockley clearly intends that the novel be read as a nationalist narrative. Such a reading creates problems, however: what do "bitter peace" and "strange contentment" mean? The paradoxes within the oxymorons strive for a poetic effect that defies resolution. They are part of a more complex series of displacements in the novel. From the beginning, Deirdre has identified herself as belonging to a real and cosmopolitan world:

> I belonged to the civilized cities of the world My home was in Paris, London, Dublin, sometimes New York I had lived among pictures, and sculptures, and books … I could not contemplate life without them "[61]

This is a conventional enough movement in imperial pastorialism: the claim of the metropole to author the real is subverted by an art which writes the colony as real and the metropole as artifice, literally the place of the artificial. Pastoral, again conventionally enough, is never an art in which nature and city are simple oppositions. The nature which pastoral purports to celebrate, is mediated through art. Here is Stockley's description of the Mzingwane valley at sunset:

> 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 [E]very evening when the sun fell … the land was wrapped in purple and silver vestments [62]

Prose like that effectively blurs distinctions between pristine nature and a metropole that knows nature only through artistic representation. The description has nothing to do with the Mzingwane and everything to do with appropriating the voice of a metropolitan art. The new nationalism is validated because the new nationalist can command the artifices of the metropole, if she wishes. Mimicry here defies the metropole to denigrate the Rhodesian voice as lacking an empowering sophistication.

Later in the novel as the columns march towards Bulawayo, the white women and the few remaining men go into laager. The English women to whom Deirdre is attached, ensure that the social distinctions prevailing in Fort George before the war began are maintained. The English-born women do not mix with the colonial-born and both regard the Boers with contempt. While the English women energetically arrange the best accommodation for themselves, the colonial-born have "the quiet air of sensible, self-

59 Stockley, *The Claw*, p 161
60 Stockley, *The Claw*, p 171
61 Stockley, *The Claw*, p 13
62 Stockley, *The Claw*, p 11

possessed women prepared for any emergency. ... They behaved as though sleeping in *laager* was an every-day affair".[63] Watching them, Deirdre wishes that:

> it had been to their set I belonged instead of to the set that looked over their heads and called them frumps and dowds… I realized 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![64]

If the colonial artist's mimicry of metropolitan art displaces the metropolitan artist as the only source of art, Deirdre, although indistinguishable from the English – she is of their set – yearns to displace English snobbery with the communal loyalties of a new nation. That Empire and Mr Rhodes's empire are implicitly distinguished from one another anticipates the confusion Rhodesia always felt about its status. After 1910, Rhodesia was ferociously loyal to England as long as the possibility threatened that it would become South Africa's fifth province and the hostility to Afrikaners in many of the early novels is an expression of this. When Responsible Government made Union an improbable political option, Rhodesia claimed for itself a uniqueness that only dominion status cou ld confirm, a status that always evaded it.

Stockely had to repress her own origins and disguise her voice if she were to write with authority. This was not a problem for Gertrude Page who alone of the early Rhodesian novelists, sold more copies of her novels than Stockley. Page was born in England and did not have to justify herself as imperial author. She was an avid supporter of Responsible Government, however, and although her early novels celebrate a romantic anti-capitalism, a pastoral of free thought, where upper-class English people defy conventions, her later work is impatient of people who are unwilling to work to provide the new nation with a sound economic foundation. In her first novel, *Love in the Wilderness,* the principal woman character, Enid Davenport, learns to love Rhodesia because she learns to love.[65] For the purposes of this paper, a more interesting character is Nan Johnson whose character is one of the earliest fictional attempts to show what a white Rhodesian-born woman might look like. We first see her armed with a rifle having just shot her first buck. She is bothered only by "having to dress up, and wear gloves, and play the part of a conventional young lady".[66] The one trauma of her young life is "that awful year when they sent her to a fashionable boarding school in England" from which she runs away. "`I couldn't help behaving badly,'" she explains to her parents. "I belong to Rhodesia through and through"[67]. More surprisingly for a writer who takes the British Empire seriously, Page makes Nan say to the homesick Enid: "`I am sure you will never want to see England again. I think it is a detestable place".[68] At the end of the novel, Nan has married Dicky Byrd, the younger son of an Earl, who runs a trading-store with singular incompetence, and she wears "an old Panama hat, above a weather-stained habit" for her wedding.[69] There is no mimicry here but there is also no creativity. The Rhodesia that Nan Johnson walks across with her rifle is the mythic space of a colonial Eden and she and Dicky are mere innocents, playing in a pre-lapsarian world where

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63 Stockley, *The Claw*, p 116
64 Stockley, *The Claw*, p 117
65 G Page, *Love in the Wilderness: The Story of Another African Farm* (George Bell, London, s a [1907])
66 Page, *Love in the Wilderness*, p 67
67 Page, *Love in the Wilderness*, p 66
68 Page, *Love in the Wilderness*, p 72
69 Page, *Love in the Wilderness*, p 325

work is not needed or rather work by white people. Empire as an affective relationship of mother and children is as absent here as are the social norms of the English upper-classes. Nan Johnson's Rhodesia transgresses both the ideology of empire and English respectability and Eden and innocence provides no alternative, balancing ideology. We have to look away from the native-born for the balance. Enid marries Keith Meredith who has trekked down Africa with his carriers and an English butler. What saves Rhodesia for Empire and possible nationhood is a replication of England's own hierarchies of authority. Colonial pastoral can be enacted only by people who have chosen to leave the metropole and to seek the fundamentals of life in the colonies. The lived pastoral of black, Boer or colonial-born are uninteresting because they are not informed by an ideal shaped in London. Meredith speaks with the authority of choice when he rhapsodizes to Enid about unfettered passions: "'I found you in the wilderness … [C]an we not be perfectly simple and natural? … Cannot our two wills together face boldly an effete produce of civilization, hideously full of flaws …?'"[70] And Enid overcome by the logic of the wilderness begins to agree: "in the wilderness, might one not slide back into that primitive simplicity of Race and do as the wilderness did …?"[71] Stockley never allows her women to indulge in sentiments like these: the slide into the primitive threatens the voice of sophistication that gives her the authority to create the informing myths of a new country.

In Page's second novel, *The Edge o' Beyond*, the debate between primitive content and duty to progress is more precisely argued.[72] A well-bred trio of English bachelors, living in pole and dagha huts and indifferent to dress and work are described as "three stalwart Rhodesians".[73] They are duly rebuked by Dinah Webberley, the sister of one of them whose voice is much closer to Kipling's than the romantic anti-capitalism of the colonial pastoral when she says that they are not the "'the right kind to give Rhodesia a good start. … [Y]ou easy going, happy-go-lucky, don't-care-a-damn gentlemen farmers will only make a playground of her, for the men who don't want the bother of being strenuous at home.'" They are "'steeped in their precious kopjes… and…develop a tendency to bask in the sun and get no "forrader", because it is so warm and pleasant and simple.'" And she invokes the energizing ideal of progress: "'it isn't the way empires are built, and chasms bridged, and mountains bored, and highways cut, and continents watered'".[74] But when Dinah has returned to England and is standing delightedly in Piccadilly Circus revelling in what she regards is the purposeful energy of the crowds, she remembers "the Silence of Rhodesia … .[A]bove the uproar and the rush – as it were in a higher layer of ether – she heard the silence of the kopjes, and vleis, and veldt – which is as a mysterious personality possessing sound".[75] Empire's imperatives can be ignored when this higher call – if the voice of silence can be a call – is heard. Mimicry allows a different voice to be partially present. Page seeks to command the voices at least of the metropole and Rhodesia so that empire can speak to the colony and the colony can speak back claiming to be inspired in its own right. The emptiness of the land and its silence asks to be filled with voices of agents speaking and acting to some purpose.

The most striking silence in both of these novelists derives from the almost total absence of blacks. In the work of both women, blacks appear as servants or labourers or in

70 Page, *Love in the Wilderness*, p 249
71 Page, *Love in the Wilderness*, p 256
72 G Page, *The Edge o Beyond* (Hurst and Blackett, London, s a [1908])
73 Page, *The Edge o Beyond*, p 44
74 Page, *The Edge o Beyond*, p 112
75 Page, *The Edge o Beyond*, p 172

The Claw as the Ndebele on the edge of defeat. They are absent as agents and their voices are never heard. The most famous imperial novel in English is, I suppose, *Kim* and Kim is a protean character able to assume the identity of any of India's apparently infinite diversities. Among his numerous identities he is a poor white, a Hindu beggar, an Afghan, an Anglo-Indian schoolboy and finally the lama's *chela*. But he enters so fully into each of these roles he that the character that he is impersonating is not a mimic. He is an ideal account of empire commanding multiple subjectivities and for him at least there is no "other" within empire except the ignorant home-born. The principal mimic in *Kim* is, of course, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, who aspires to nothing more than a Fellowship of the Royal Society. Loyal to Britain, courageous and indefatigable despite his frequent claim that he is a "fearful man," when he tries to speak the language of scientific ethnology, he is absurd, failing to master the scientific detachment that testifies to the objective gaze of the British orientalist. In Urdu he says that Huneefa at Mahbub's order "'has charmed [Kim] against all devils and all dangers – in the name of her devils.'" In English, this becomes "'Mahbub is highly obsolete, *I* think, to indulge in such supersteetion. Why, it is all ventro*lo*quy. Belly-speak –eh?'" [76] But when Kim warns him against speaking English, he dismisses Kim's anxieties that their cover will be blown: "'I am only Babu showing off my English to you. All we Babus talk English to show off.'"[77] The colonial white can mimic the imperial voice and serve his or her ends by doing so. As far as Kipling and the Rhodesian novelists are concerned, mimicry by the person of colour must always fail. The inability of such a person to think like a white denies the slippage and excess that Bhabha sees in the successful mimic. There is only manifest difference and the threat that the mimic poses never materializes.

Colonial mimicry of the metropolitan voice was a strategy to negotiate power for the Rhodesians but as we saw with Poppy silencing herself within a male-authored imperial romance, colonial mimicry was oddly sterile providing little of Taussig's "terrifically ambiguous power". The colonial mimic could envisage no other social mode than a replica of England. In Gertrude Page's *The Veldt Trail*, Elizabeth Lyall is accorded an epiphany of what the Rhodesian could become.[78] She imagines a future when

> " … there will be charming house and lovely gardens dotted about these ranches – with tennis lawns, and ball-rooms and parks … big homes and little homes, purged of envy and hatred, and all uncharitableness … all friendly together, in a free open life without too many conventions … and Rhodesia a progressive, enlightened country, with no slums at all, and no unemployed, and no dreary monotonous round for the workers Playing fields and flowers for everyone, and plenty of books and interesting lectures "[79]

A year after *The Veldt Trail* was published, delegates to the Southern Rhodesian Missionary conference were describing the appalling conditions in the Bulawayo and Salisbury locations.[80] The slums were already part of Elizabeth Lyall's world and her Utopia was rotten at its urban core and within a decade there would be grinding poverty in many of the reserves. The living and working conditions of blacks were not her concern. Because Rhodesian Nationalism was a white nationalism, all that these writers could mimic were the routines of petty-bourgeois English provincial life. They were unable to command a dialectic that would create a new order out of the meeting of black and white.

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76 R Kipling, *Kim* (Macmillan, London, 1901), p 259
77 Kipling, *Kim*, p 260
78 G Page, *The Veldt Trail* (Cassell, London, 1919)
79 Page, *The Veldt Trail*, pp 205-206
80 I Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (Longman, London, 1980), p 20

Abstract

Recent theory has argued that colonial mimicry of the metropole is not a symptom of the colonised's loss of identity, but instead a subversive strategy that signifies the colonized's refusal of their role as inferior others. Mimicry as empowerment has been exclusively applied to the colonized of colour because the imperial ideal propagated in particular by Kipling was that the English are the English whether born in England or a colony. This paper argues that the colonial, especially the colonial woman, was regarded as inferior by the home-born. If the Southern African woman writer wanted to be taken seriously and write a new national literature, she had to appropriate the tone and the perspectives of the metropole. Examples include one of Cynthia Stockley's heroines who is a literal mimic, narrators who register as exotic what is the writer's familiar reality, and English-born women allowing their new home to give them command over a new language. The larger purpose of these strategies is not to become English but to show that by being able to write like an English woman, the colony has at its disposal authoritative voices that are evidence of its right to nationhood.

Opsomming

Die Mimiek-vroue: Vroeë Vroueskrywers en Wit Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionalismes

Volgens onlangse teoretisering is koloniale nabootsing van die metropool nie 'n simptoom van die gekoloniseerde se verlies van identiteit nie, maar eerder 'n ondermynende strategie wat die gekoloniseerdes se weiering om hulle rol as minderwaardige andere te aanvaar, aandui. Mimiek / nabootsing as bemagtiging is tot dusver eksklusief toegepas op gekleurde gekoloniseerdes, aangesien die imperiale ideaal, veral soos deur Kipling gepropageer, was dat die Engelse Engels was, ongeag of hulle in Engeland of in 'n kolonie gebore is. Die argument in hierdie artikel is dat die koloniale, veral die koloniale vrou, deur diegene wat in Engeland gebore is, as minderwaardig beskou is. Indien 'n Suid-Afrikaanse vroueskrywer ernstig opgeneem wou word en 'n nuwe nasionale letterkunde wou skryf, moes sy haar die toon en die perspektiewe van die metropool toe-eien. Voorbeelde hiervan sluit een van Cynthia Stockley se heldinne in wat 'n literêre nabootser is, vertellers wat die outeur se bekende realiteit as eksoties registreer, sowel as Engels-gebore vroue wat hulle nuwe tuiste toelaat om hulle 'n nuwe taal te laat bemeester. Die groter doel met hierdie strategieë is nie om Engels te word nie, maar om te bewys dat die kolonie, deur in staat te wees om soos 'n Engelse vrou te skryf, oor gesaghebbende stemme beskik wat as bewys dien van die reg tot nasieskap.

Key Words

Rhodesian, women, novels, mimicry, nationhood, imperialism, colonial inferiority.