FICTION IN THE AGE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The Legacy of British Realism

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England

1999
something that can be described realistically. Primitive cultures require another mode of storytelling. By thus distinguishing the north of England from the world that realism describes, Emily Brontë nevertheless participated in the same project with such relatively worldly-wise novelists as Walter Scott and Maria Edgeworth. She helped to render herself as well as her region obsolete in fact, as she immortalized them in literature.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

*Sexuality in the Age of Racism: Hungry Alice*

Both Lewis Carroll's explorations of the interiority of a little girl and H. Rider Haggard's equally fantastic colonial adventure stories for boys acknowledge the dullness of a world bound to realism's categories. They do so, however, only to demonstrate that a world lacking such differences is terrifying. Violation of the visible distinctions between the races of humankind is especially so. It can be enjoyed only in and as a fiction, and then only at the cost of gender and implicitly at the cost of class as well. If we compare Alice's Adventures in Wonderland with King Solomon's Mines, we are likely to notice that both embark on their respective investigations of the perilous alternatives to realism when an image gets out of hand. A white rabbit streaks across Alice's field of vision sporting a pocket watch, and the band of brothers who provide the composite hero of Haggard's story stumble on a map to a territory from which the mapmaker failed to return alive. These images draw the girl and boy protagonists of each adventure story into a big, dark hole in the earth, where boys are especially at risk of being swallowed up. As in the female victims of Bram Stoker's Dracula, however, being consumed by another manifests itself in Carroll's girl protagonist as a
pchant for consuming others. For her to "go native" in this way would obviously remove her from modern culture as surely as being swallowed up by the earth. Where Haggard pits his English men against an African sorceress capable of turning them to inert lumps of physical nature, Carroll pits his girl protagonist against an equally fantastic brand of matriarchy. Every bit as dangerous as the female landscape of Haggard's Africa, the contrastingly domestic terrain of Wonderland threatens to send Alice in the other direction—toward unbridled agency and the murderous exercise of will. Their respective departures from humdrum realism thus put both protagonists at the mercy of a ravenous woman who, as I will explain, was the product of an unwitting cultural collaboration as pervasive as that among the photographers, folklorists, and novelists who at once produced the folk of Great Britain and rendered them obsolete.

In this chapter I will explore the relationship between British colonialism and the fear of engulfment embodied in a racially marked woman. This fantasy of self-dissolution can be read as a way of dealing with the circulation of information and objects from the colonies, into English homes, and out again into the colonies where national identity was undergoing perpetual redefinition as new territories and peoples were incorporated into European empires. This fantasy of engulfment not only made certain categorical differences seem absolutely essential to one's very being, it also provided the means of maintaining the differences on which European realism itself depends.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, photographers and fiction writers took up the same ethnographic project that occupied many a nineteenth-century anthropologist, the quest to discover whether human beings were bound together as a single species. This common ground was especially difficult to chart in situations where both the customs and the physical features of the populations under observation made them appear so different from those making the observations as to suggest that those differences arose from different species. The effort to identify a common humanity across lines made visible as race would profoundly change
d how readers imagined their relation to the various Asian and African populations newly incorporated into the British Empire. It was incumbent on those readers to imagine the Empire as a single human population engaged in reciprocal—indeed, even familial—relations. But it was also necessary for the British to think of themselves as different from other people by virtue of a Britishness that positioned them above people of Asia and Africa in the evolutionary tree. In this respect, Britain's understanding of itself as the core of an Empire ringed by colonies might seem, at first glance, to reproduce externally the same cultural difference and internal colonialism that asked readers to reconceptualize the nation as an English core with a Celtic periphery.

It is, however, a matter of some debate as to whether the Eurocentrism that developed with colonial expansion can be seen as either a reproduction of or a model for the ethnocentrism that maintained the Celtic periphery. To make a clear distinction between the two very different literary manifestations of racism, we do not have to understand race in terms of the physical properties of the populations in question. Étienne Balibar contends that the difference between the two kinds of racism has nothing to do with the populations so subjected. The difference is a matter of a shift in European perspective. He sees the racism associated with internal colonialism as a means of justifying the marginalization of "an internal minority which is not merely 'assimilated,' but constitutes an integral part of the culture and economy" of the European nations from their beginning. It might appear, he argues, that in comparison "colonial racism constitutes the prime example of external racism—an extreme variant of xenophobia combining fear and scorn—perpetuated by the awareness the colonizers have always had, in spite of the claim to have founded a durable order, that that order rested on a reversible relation of forces."

Balibar regards this distinction as much too simple to be true. Just as "internal colonialism" has an externalizing function, so "external colonialism"—those practices we tend to associate with nineteenth-century colonialism proper—has an internalizing dimension.
Racism confirms the marginalization of assimilated minorities within the nation, in the first case, and the subordinated inclusion of "native" populations—by such means, for example, as forced labor and sexual exploitation—in the internal structure of the colony, in the second. Assigning them a racial difference is one way of explaining the exclusion of certain assimilated groups from the privileges enjoyed by the dominant ethnicity. Just so, the fundamental "interiority" of the colonial population is responsible, in Balibar's estimation, for both a European "ambivalence" toward "natives" and the "way in which the subhuman nature attributed to the colonized comes to determine the self-image developed within the colonized nationalism in the period when the world was being divided up." Colonialism, he concludes, "a fluctuating combination of continued interiorization and 'internal exclusion'."

V. Y. Mudimbe uses a similar notion of cultural oscillation to define the so-called colonial periphery as neither purely a "premodern" or "underdeveloped" space nor a cultural space where the premodern had been successfully appropriated and transformed in European terms; the periphery is wherever something like this "fluctuating combination" between modern and premodern is taking place. To explain the cultural conditions creating and maintaining such a relationship between European and African, Mudimbe offers a just-so story about the production of Hans Bergmair's painting, _Exotic Tribe_ (1508):

Let us imagine the painter at work. He has just read Springer's description of his voyage and, possibly on the basis of some sketches, he is trying to create an image of blacks in "Gennena." Perhaps he has to use a model, presumably white but strongly built. The painter is staring at the pale body, imagining schemes to transform it into a black entity. The model has become a mirror through which the painter evaluates how the norms of similitude and his own creativity would impart both a human identity and a racial difference to his canvas.

If Europeans had long envisioned Africans as Europeans blackened and stripped of their cultural uniqueness, we should not be surprised to find the differences between one culture and another threatening to collapse centuries later under the pressure of a modern form of imperialism that incorporated other peoples and sought to dominate them culturally. Under these circumstances, the African might on occasion appear before the European displaying all the ontological difference denoted by race, but the relationship between colonizer and colonized was actually much more complex than any such visual binary could suggest.

The primitivism of the "good native" had the capacity to meld with its evil twin, degeneracy, whenever natives could be read as blackened versions of the white European. So perceived, difference was no longer difference so much as the pure negation of whatever made Europeans modern and guaranteed their superiority as such. Where the primitiveness of the "good native" called for the kind of acculturation and education a child required from a parent, the so-called degenerate native had to suffer complete exclusion. We might say that Conrad's Kurtz flipped from the one perceptual grid to the other when he simultaneously went native and madly scrawled "Exterminate the brutes!" across the page of his reformist tract. The equation of racial differences with natural facts of the body, because it changed the implications of assimilating so-called "natives" into the same human community with Western man, also changed the relationship of core to periphery.

In Chapter 4, I read _Wuthering Heights_ as a record of internal colonialism, wherein two factors mitigated the kind of conflict normally resulting from racial mixture in English fiction. First, insofar as the periphery represents an earlier moment in history, certain individuals and even some folkways—the knowledge preserved by the Earnshaw housekeeper, for example—survive into the present tense and invigorate modern culture by doing so. Contrastingly primitive and urbane versions of British men and women thus appear to exist along the same ontological continuum, where the one can presumably develop into the other. Second, those who—like Heathcliff—
bear visible racial markings do not survive into the future. Their legacy is neither biological nor cultural but is confined to disruptions of the past that clear the way for modernization.

To imagine the African as a biologically earlier version of the European is to preclude the possibility of individuals breaking out of a peripheral position and assimilating to the core in any other than the most degraded of positions. When enacted on a global scale, the differentiation of core from periphery cannot constitute two different moments of the same cultural history, as they do in Wuthering Heights. Indeed, biological racism inevitably comes to the fore and distinguishes two different moments of a natural history that has already transpired. Nineteenth-century natural history supported Victorian anthropology’s belief that so-called primitive peoples reached their natural maturity as the Victorians now saw them—as both primitive and degenerate versions of themselves—while Europeans continued to evolve. From this perspective, the relation of periphery to core cannot be understood as a relation of past to present, not if those who inhabit the periphery represent a historical cul-de-sac which modern man avoided. Though enmeshed in a single political history, the two belong to distinct and irreconcilable moments of natural history. For an individual to break free from a periphery with such arrested natural and cultural development and enter the culture of the core would necessarily change the very status of the core as such. Movement across the racial timeline is therefore virtually impossible.

According to the same cultural logic, however, the idea of a human continuum held up in the other direction; it was entirely possible for modern man to slide down the evolutionary slope into the abyss of primitivism, where he would become just one more among many peripheral peoples. It is helpful to think of this later mapping of the core-periphery relationship as a reversal of the logic according to which Europeans exalted the unsullied state of nature they had modernized. Confronting their own image in that of an African body inscribed with signs of degeneracy, Victorian intellectuals phobically disavowed the African in themselves and sought to modernize what could not successfully be repressed or marginalized. The European not only projected his body onto the African or Asian; he subsequently introjected the bad desires he had inscribed in that body and sought to subdue them internally, or so late Victorian literature would suggest. Thus the desire to achieve continuity with the native as the embodiment of a more original and pure brand of humanity led inevitably to the demonization, repression, and abjection of signs of that same primitivism as the symptom on which depends the identity of the modern individual as such. The reflux of both Africanness and Asianness into European culture and consciousness threatened to dissolve racial distinctions into an imaginary field of equivalencies, where modern man appeared to be just another variety of a common mankind rather than the most direct line of descent to the endpoint and zenith of natural history. This, it could be argued, is the way with symptoms.

In order to maintain its identity, a class may externalize all those features one cannot have and behaviors one cannot enact and still belong to modern European culture. But this fantasmatogoric embodiment will not permanently maintain the boundaries between what belongs inside and what outside that culture. As both Balibar and Mudimbe suggest, peripheral phenomena always flow two ways, both in and out of an equally imaginary core. The initial gesture of externalization, or abjection, is destined to be repeated, because the gesture is one that necessarily fails to fix a boundary between self and non-self. I will be emphasizing this reflexive dimension of the colonial project as I read Lewis Carroll’s girl’s book and H. Rider Haggard’s boy’s adventure story. This reading will trace the complex process by which Victorian culture reversed the threat posed by Great Britain’s incorporation of other peoples and refigured that threat as a voracious woman.

**Natives and Prostitutes**

My account begins with a highly contested bit of domestic legislation passed in 1864 and amended in 1866 and again in 1869. As Judith

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Walkowitz made unforgottably clear in her classic study of Victorian prostitution, the Contagious Diseases Acts named prostitutes as the source of venereal disease and attempted to combat the problem of infection quite simply by confining it to the bodies of a specific group of women. The new law required all women who were considered prostitutes to register and submit to regular pelvic examinations. It appointed surgeons to perform these examinations and empowered them to incarcerate infected women for up to six months. A full account of the medical procedures is beyond the scope of this discussion, but I do want to note the zealous efficiency with which such professional men as William Acton carried on this important work. Stalwart liberal, esteemed surgeon, and author of numerous medical books and treatises, Acton proudly claimed to have “assisted in the thorough examination of 58 women with the speculum . . . in the course of one hour and three-quarters.” One cannot read much of his protracted account, despite his good intentions, without understanding it as a record of how one class humiliated another by subjecting its women to involuntary pelvic exams. It becomes very clear that purification rites of exactly this nature were carried on in the name of national health when we consider what metaphors were used to describe infected women. With the exception of a few dissenting voices (that, for example, of John Stuart Mill), the cast of experts mobilized in defense of the Contagious Diseases Acts used the language of class to describe the women whom they had forced to register as prostitutes. These women were, in the words of one man of medicine, . . . dirty, clad in unwomanly rags, some appearing half-starved, covered with vermin, causing those near them to shun them with aversion; careless in matters of common decency, their conversation having mingled with it such words as made one shudder to listen to; woefully ignorant, they appeared, in their utter filth and depravity, lost to all the better qualities of human beings.

Metaphors of pollution encouraged the most technical medical discussions to conclude that these women were in fact the cause of infection, or “poison,” as it was more often called. Certain of their assumptions about the female body made it possible for the specialists in the disease to argue that a man had contracted the disease from a woman. This was true even when his symptoms were far more advanced than hers, because her body gave off poisonous fluids even under ordinary conditions. Thus one expert concluded that “uterine discharges are one of its constitutional manifestations, and I think that these discharges, at any rate, may be a vehicle of the virus.” Working-class women were still more likely to be infectious because, according to other testimony, at those particular times when a woman should retire from all sexual communication, in consequence of her natural monthly disturbance, it is well known that except in rare instances they do not so withdraw, on the contrary they afford intercourse to soldiers as usual, and the menstrual discharge in this class of women being exceedingly irritating, the production of urethritis, orchitis &c., is frequently the consequence.

Though the effects of mercury were known to be extraordinarily toxic, especially when people were overworked and undernourished, the medical profession frequently classified it as “an antidote to [the] poison” that women naturally exude. Given that the official summary of reports on the effectiveness of the Contagious Diseases Act passed in 1864 admitted the Act neither decreased the number of prostitutes nor curtailed the spread of disease, it is particularly revealing that the same report is generally positive about the results of its implementation. The report claimed the Act had inadvertently produced two positive results. First, it generated a great deal of information about venereal disease that testified to “its prevalence among all classes of society, its insidious nature, the frequent failure of all but men of great experience to
recognize it, and, moreover, to the most important fact, that the poisoned foetus in utero is no infrequent cause of miscarriage.” According to the summary, in other words, women of the lower classes had spread a poison throughout English society that directly assaulted motherhood. In this way, the report removed middle-class men from their position as the pernicious transmitters of the poison inside the bodies of the one class of women to the babies inside the bodies of the other. Moreover, the report identified those with specialized knowledge of the disease—again, middle-class men—as all that stood between unborn middle-class children and a disease aimed directly at them by working-class women.

Although their patients are described as poisonous, it is important to note that the same group of experts attributed maternal qualities to the institutions where these women were incarcerated. It was on grounds that the hospital provided a kindly nurse and a spiritual home to wayward women that the official summary of reports managed to portray the Contagious Diseases Act as a success, when it had actually failed to halt the spread of venereal disease: “The evidence shows that in [this] one most important point the Act has proved successful, . . . that which relates to the feelings of the unfortunate women with whom it has to deal; so far from opposing its operation, they appear to appreciate its value to themselves.”

This transfer of the proper female function from inmate to institution is demonstrated in anecdotal evidence throughout the reports that follow. One doctor, for example, offered the following account to show “that a residence in the hospital, in some cases, has an extraordinary effect” on the prostitute:

There was one house into which I went with the inspector of police lately. I heard a woman reading with a loud voice, when we got to the passage, I stopped to listen, and I found, to my astonishment, that she was reading from Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress.” I went into the room and found no less than seven women sitting round a good looking woman of 25

who was reading from “Pilgrim’s Progress,” all paying the greatest attention.

To conclude a string of observations that emphasize the degenerate features of working-class women who were less eager to seek redemption through literacy, the same man recommended that “fully one-half the class” of prostitutes be forcibly sent to a reformatory after their illness was cured. “It would,” he claimed, “be a charity, as well as a mere precaution, to hide them from gratification of their sin for a year or two.”

Another cluster of legal measures was also aimed at coercive regulation of working-class sexuality. Beginning in 1859, a whole set of mutually reinforcing practices developed around motherhood to secure institutionally for infants what human nature had evidently failed to supply. The first infant protection societies appeared; safer adoption procedures were put in place; laws were passed to restrict baby farming, register midwives, and prosecute those who dropped newborns down public latrines. By 1874 the English Registration Act was passed as part of a concerted effort on the part of the state to register the birth and death of each child, whether bastard or stillborn. But despite all this legislation and the introduction of both the rubber nipple and the first manufactured baby food, it was not until the 1920s that the infant mortality rate decreased substantially in England. The very fact that these measures failed as dismally as the Contagious Diseases Acts is significant. This failure implies that the public insisted so righteously on regulating working-class women, not because such regulation would curtail the spread of disease, but because their insistence on regulation itself solved a problem: The volumes devoted to the failure of working-class mothering relocated the cause of the deplorable physical condition of the working class in the moral condition of their women. All the discursive uproar concerning motherhood thus translated an insurmountable problem in the domain of production into an equally insurmountable problem in the domain of reproduction.
In turning from legal discourse to the new and flourishing social sciences, one can easily see how the female body developed into a text enabling literate people to establish moral differences between themselves and other social groups. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the madhouse population provided subjects for studies that identified women prone to mental illness. Prominent among experts in this area, Henry Maudsley claimed that women prone to inherited mental defects could be identified by such "bodily and mental marks" as 'an irregular and unsymmetrical conformation of the head, a want of regularity and harmony of the features... malformations of the external ear... tics, grimaces... stammering and defects of pronunciation... peculiarities of the eyes,' and a predilection for puns."24 Maudsley apparently advised men of the literate classes accordingly: they should inspect a prospective wife for "visible signs of inward and invisible faults which will have their influence in breeding."25

As Victorian intellectuals became increasingly absorbed in classifying, knowing, and controlling deviance, the female anatomy offered itself as a text whereon those deviant qualities of mind became especially legible. Social scientists discovered, for example, that a woman's moral condition could be read in certain details of her face and genitals. Indeed, they discovered that the genitals of prostitutes were typically enlarged by abscesses and tumors.26 Others proved that the faces of these women characteristically bore protruding jaws, flat noses, misshapen foreheads, and attached earlobes. On the basis of such homologies, social scientists developed a set of analytical procedures which would determine the nature and behavior of one end of a woman by looking at the other. This logic of the body drove pioneers in anthropology to perform dissections on women of groups recently brought under European rule. These men discovered that Asian and African women normally bore the very features of face and genitals that characterized only prostitutes and madwomen in Europe.27 To become familiar with these legal and scientific definitions of the body is to recognize a fearful symmetry that cut across the visual media as well, which in turn made race something that was unmistakably inscribed on the surface of the body.28

During the 1860s, photographers broke away from aestheticized portrayals of madness that celebrated the individuality of human consciousness and began to capture the faces of madwomen, whores, and aborigines in a manner resembling the criminologists' use of photography (Figures 5.1, 5.2).29 The point was not to capture the individuality of the deviant person but to classify deviance in a way that included very different cultural attitudes and behaviors within a
single classification system where gender made all the difference. By focusing on prostitutes, madwomen, and native women, this classification system identified forms of cultural difference with a lack of femininity that took the form of female excesses. What began as a difference between a culturally acquired gender and sexual nature was well on its way to designating a difference between two different natures which were embodied in modern women and their native counterparts, respectively. Another example of scientific photography may help to explain why this style was so effective. It reveals the quasi-pornographic quality that comes from subjecting the other's body to the gaze. Taken from a collection of Désiré Charnay's expeditionary photography, these shots give the viewer a sense of seeing all sides of the body and even penetrating into the body itself (Figure 5.3). At the same time, the camera uses this power to strip the other body of all national or ethnic specificity. The photograph of native men bears the label Macoua, Arab Indian, and black Creole from Reunion...
ion, but the photograph itself arranges their bodies so that they seem to present different views of a single person. The other portrait is simply entitled Group of Negresses, suggesting that native women are even more generic than their male counterparts.

Coinciding with the production of this scientific body was the development of that equally stereotypical "salon" body that I have associated with the work of the Julia Margaret Cameron circle. Members of the circle used the camera to deify interiority in the manner of Pre-Raphaelite painting. Like the painters they admired, these photographers were attracted to women in the act of languishing or even leaving this world, but their work is also remembered for photographs of prepubescent children (Figure 5.4). Although the highly aestheticized female was the trademark of the group, they occasionally photographed common people, and when they did, they adopted the documentary style. In a photograph titled The Butcher's Visit (Figure 5.5), the bodies of working man and servant women present a striking contrast to the otherworldly art body. Coupled with the title, the characteristic stockiness of these figures forges subtle links between the female servant and the masculine character of her labor. Nor can we overlook the racial difference suggested by a duskeness that sets her flesh apart from the near-translucent skin of an elite.
woman. Nineteenth-century photography established the difference between the two classes as a difference of the body itself. A case in point is one of Lewis Carroll’s photographs of the girl for whom he wrote the *Alice* books, entitled *Alice Liddell as a Beggar Girl* (Figure 5.6). Here, there is no mistaking Alice for a girl of the underclasses. Given that he has named her, posed her against a pastoral backdrop, and had her confront the observer eye to eye, we know this is no mere type but the portrait of a name-brand individual posing as such a type.

Ultimately, my point in stressing the contrast between these two ways of visualizing the female body is to establish the collusion between them. Though mutually exclusive, the two were born together and behaved as a single cultural formation, one always calling the other to mind. By the 1870s, this double-bodied figure was shaping almost every aspect of Victorian culture. I have already called attention to her presence on the pages of scientific studies and the walls of art galleries. Add to this her regular appearance in daily newspapers, weekly magazines, and monthly and quarterly journals and reviews; then consider how she hung for years on tastefully decorated walls in sentimental line drawings and oil paintings, lay on tea tables in open photo albums, arrived in vestibules on postcards, animated advertisements for household products, and illustrated some of the most popular novels, travel narratives, and missionary accounts of the day.

In some respects, this was the same image that had earlier identified womanhood itself with the women of the respectable classes. But something happened to her slim, white, and self-contained figure as it began to operate on an international scale, authorizing Englishmen to supervise members of less developed nations on grounds that non-European women were not really women even if they were unmistakably female. It may well have been that this way of depicting their relation to the colonizer made newly subordinated peoples more likely to misrecognize themselves as defective versions of middle-class Europe, but that is not my concern here. I am more interested in the fact that European intellectuals had trouble maintaining the idea that cultures with such women were childlike and feminine versions of themselves. It was through their reinscription of the differences between European self and racial other at the level of popular culture that the colonial venture had the greatest impact on respectable people back in England. For such people, sexuality was "normal" only in the abstract. It was then and still is now, I believe,
all-important to reject those specific appearances and behaviors that indicate an excess of sexuality at a given moment in time, for in so doing we maintain our status as “normal” people.

The Africanization of English Girlhood

Having indicated something of the proportions that the image of degenerate womanhood had assumed in nineteenth-century culture, I would like to consider how this negative representation of the subordinated gender changed the sexuality of the class who consumed photographic representations of her. Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland offers special insight into the relationship these representations established between middle-class women and their racially marked counterparts. Written and published during the same period as both the Contagious Diseases Acts and legislation to reduce infant mortality, Carroll’s story carried many of these same textualizing procedures into a whole new arena of human experience. We can indeed observe the link between children’s literature and the Victorian obsession with the bodies of madwomen and whores at the very beginning of the story, as Alice plummets down the rabbit hole:

First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything: then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and bookshelves: here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed: it was labeled “ORANGE MARMALADE,” but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar, for fear of killing somebody underneath, so she managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.53

In this passage, we bear witness to an event of no little historical significance. At the beginning of her fall (always a tip-off when women are concerned) the source of fear is located in the world outside her body.54 Even so, Alice is strangely unconcerned about “what she was coming to,” and for good reason. Halfway down the rabbit hole, she finds herself in a thoroughly domesticated interior.

Then, as appetites will, Alice’s suddenly takes over her body. She grabs a jar marked “marmalade,” and this empty sign of gratification mysteriously reverses the trajectory of her desire. Alice temporarily loses her interest in food. She grows anxious. Having disturbed domestic order, she wants nothing so much as to return the jar to its place. Appetite gives way to an equally compulsive desire for self-control, as Alice comes to understand herself as someone who endangers others. Or so Carroll writes: “she did not like to drop the jar, for fear of killing somebody underneath.” Nowhere in the earlier fiction I have read—and there was a great deal written in England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to tell girls how to be girls—can I recall anything like this: a girl in the act of falling, but a girl only vaguely curious about what would befall her. Then, within the space of a very few lines, an almost imperceptible danger outside her body gives way to a danger within, one capable of erupting at any moment. Alice consequently loses her fear of falling and becomes afraid of letting go.

Like those of working-class and native women, her body is potentially out of control and, by its very nature, in need of regulation. But where the problem with those other female bodies had a genital origin, the dangers contained in Alice’s body begin and end with her mouth. With every act of ingestion comes certain loss of physical control. One such episode sends her shooting up in height through the branches of a tree exactly where an anxious pigeon has sought safety for her eggs beyond the reach of serpents. The following bit of their dialogue explains how eating destabilizes Alice’s identity:

“But I’m not a serpent, I tell you!” said Alice. “I’m a—I’m a—”

“Well! What are you?” said the Pigeon. “I can see you’re trying to invent something!”

“I— I’m a little girl,” said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she
remembered the number of changes she had gone through that day.

“A likely story indeed!” said the Pigeon, in a tone of the deepest contempt. “I’ve seen a good many little girls in my time, but never one with such a neck as that! No, no! You’re a serpent; and there’s no use denying it. I suppose you’ll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!” (54)

Carroll saw to it that Alice would have a problem controlling her mouth, when he gave her a prodigious appetite and put her in a world made of food. Wonderland contains such creatures as the mock turtle, the lobster, and all the little whittings who manage to swim with their backs well-coated with bread crumbs. Alice’s situation, so defined, invites us to consider why Carroll animated a world by bringing the copious modern dinner table back to life, and why he had his heroine acquire her identity in relation to objects so strangely revitalized. The immediate and lasting popularity of his book suggests that we should look to the new consumer culture for the cultural link between the colonial venture and the appetite of a little girl.

It is now commonplace to say that fiction carried on a long-term intimate relationship with advertising. During the eighteenth century, argues Jennifer Wicke, fiction borrowed from advertising as a means of self-promotion. During the Victorian period, however, certain novels sought to distinguish themselves from the mass culture by criticizing authors and readers who were captivated by the values of the literary marketplace. Novels, in other words, display an ambivalent relationship both with their own commercial success and with the class of people whose moral values provided the basis of literary authority. The 1860s was also the period when consumerism became part of mothering. Suddenly, shopping was something that women, rather than men, were supposed to do. Moreover, department stores appeared in England and France to display the goods of empire in a setting that uniquely combined shopping with dining out and entertainment. In this way, the new mode of shopping associated with the acquisition of objects with the pleasure of surveying and also literally consuming, or eating, them. The locations for such pleasures were often described in terms of a wonderland. The enchantments of the Crystal Palace in 1851 and the solemnities of the Queen’s Jubilee of 1887 carried over into the department store. In what appeared to be vast and illuminated museum-like displays of objects from many corners of the world, virtually any English man or woman could survey the wealth of Empire in the manner of the Queen. But such democracy was also considered dangerous. Women might be seduced by the appeal of objects into purchasing what was beyond their budgets or beneath their station. Such were the inducements to shop that kleptomania, a compulsion afflicting women of the respectable classes, became a problem for the first time in history.

When one brings these insights to a reading of Alice, it becomes apparent that her tumble down the rabbit hole initiated a new moment in the history of desire. It is difficult to imagine one of Jane Austen’s heroines so endangered by shopping. Indications that she was too attentive to the goods sold in town could indeed represent a minor flaw in such an otherwise goodhearted woman as Catherine Morland’s chaperone in Northanger Abbey, just as it could betray the malformed sensibility of an Augusta Elton in Emma, but neither a woman’s eligibility for marriage nor the class status of her family hung in the balance when she shopped. Her relation to objects did not determine so much as reveal what kind of woman she was, and substantially more was revealed by the man to whom such a woman was attracted. That object choice determined what social position she would occupy.

Alice’s problems with appetite tell us how the whole concept of desire changed as women became consumers in the world of the department store. Carroll’s heroine feels anxious in a way that earlier generations simply could not have experienced: she is worried about fitting in. This anxiety produces a form of taste specifically formed to regulate the desire for food. It induces her to stop bolting down every consumable object she encounters and instead to nibble one
side of a mushroom or another, in hopes of stabilizing the body that appetite repeatedly disfigures. Such control of consumption allows Alice to grow without ruining her figure in a way that invites her comparison to a serpent. For even though her size increases at the story’s end, she retains the prepubescent shape that distinguishes her from all the other women in that story. As appetite assumes the central role within the child’s body, then, it redefines sexual desire. The girl’s ability to master appetite indicates whether or not she contains desires characterizing both men and unruly women. If so, she is destined never to fit in. 

As he made sexual desire contingent on the vicissitudes of a form of appetite present in childhood, Carroll also revised the role taste had to play in a world of beckoning objects. It is important to note how carefully he links the problem of appetite with another form of oral aggression. His wonderland is made of literature as well as food; both beast fable and dinner table supply its characters. Thus from the moment she reaches for the empty jar marked “Marmalade,” words and food exist in a curiously interchangeable relationship for Alice. She is always in danger of letting it slip that she would not mind eating the very creatures with whom she converses, and perhaps she has. Along with a persistent hunger, Alice contains dissident voices that infiltrate and turn the content of her speech performances. When requested to stand up and repeat “Tis the voice of the sluggard,” for instance, “her head was so full of the Lobster-Quadrille, that she hardly knew what she was saying; and the words came very queer indeed.” When they do come, the words of the song are disfigured by her appetite: “‘Tis the voice of the lobster [she says, substituting “lobster” for “sluggard”]: I heard him declare, ‘You have baked me too brown, I must sugar my hair.’” (98). As she substitutes “lobster” for “sluggard,” Alice also replaces the vice of laziness with an overconcern for food, demonstrating that appetite disfigures a girl’s speech as surely as it does her body. Indeed, all the elements of the story conspire to convince us that appetite disfigures speech because speech, like appetite, originates within that body, while writing comes from the adult world of classrooms and books outside the body. Each lapse in her speech performances thus reaffirms the assumption that Alice could control her appetite if only she would stick to writing.

In the English society that Carroll offers up to girls’ imaginations, objects behave much like transitional objects in British object relations theory. Both self and non-self, they represent the self as an object in the world. Thus when Alice suddenly grows farther than usual away from her feet, those feet behave as synecdoches of the body itself: “Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I’m sure I shan’t be able! I shall be a great deal too far off to trouble myself about you” (14). This self-objectification seems to shatter Alice’s autonomy in the very attempt to produce it: “‘But I must be kind to them,’ thought Alice, ‘or perhaps they won’t walk the way I want to go!’” (14–15). In this feigning mastery over the rules of her culture, however, Alice actually gains new mastery over herself, as she proceeds to cut a deal with her feet: “Let me see. I’ll give them a new pair of boots every Christmas.” And she went on planning to herself how she would manage it. ‘They must go by carrier,’ she thought; ‘and how funny it’ll seem, sending presents to one’s own feet!” (15). Childhood according to Carroll turns out to be the condition of lacking the very kind of power that subjects exercise over objects, the power to classify, to evaluate, to consume with discrimination. The acquisition of literacy is what empowers subjects to keep objects in their place. If Alice fails to distinguish herself from working-class and native women whenever she gives way to appetite, then she reestablishes that distinction in a more decisive way as she begins to crave this power more than she craves objects themselves.

In bringing us to this conclusion, however, Alice’s misadventures bring us to the very heart of a contradiction. We must recall that objects in the story tend to come engraved with the invitation to consume them. “Eat me” or “drink me,” they say. Her compulsive response to a marmalade label indicates that writing in fact creates the appetite that Alice must control through reading and recitation. How, then, can appetite originate inside her body if it originates in
writing? *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* defines the heroine's development as the acquisition of a peculiar kind of literacy that embraces this self-contradiction. Put another way, Alice herself embodies the fantasmagorical spiral of desire and restraint that women would soon experience in relation to a world made of enticing objects. Alice's tumble down the rabbit hole reveals an appetite for marmalade. Because she has the literacy of the ruling class, however, Alice has acquired an appetite for rules well before her adventures begin. And even though something that seems more like an aversion to books prompts her adventures in Wonderland, Alice's story is ultimately a struggle to possess the kind of taste that comes with literacy. Like her wish to enter the rose garden, her appetite for marmalade and whittings is an expression of that taste.

In order for a woman to grow up within the spiral of desire that constitutes such taste, objects must be inherently attractive. They must present themselves to the consumer as things she must resist. In Carroll's fantasy for little girls, there is neither a single form of appetite that does not require control, nor any gesture of control that does not imply the presence of some appetite. Whether he knew it or not, it made sense for him to place his heroine in constant danger from her appetite, establishing a relationship between female subject and object that is essential to the modern consumer. Indeed, his story shows how fear of appetite became necessary to the production of the taste specific to women of the privileged classes. We can observe precisely this subtle but profound change coming over Alice during the course of her adventures; as she wanders back and forth.
between the poles of desire and self-restraint, all possibility for pleasure splits off from appetite and attaches itself to self-control.

In reading this account of childhood as a story about a struggle between words and appetite for the power to define the female body, I have tried to suggest how and why a work of children’s literature came to reproduce the double-bodied figure that shaped very different territories of Victorian culture and linked them to one another. But nothing makes the point quite so well as the illustrations that appeared in the 1866 edition of the novel published by Macmillan. Studies of these illustrations have turned up several sources for the Duchess and probably for the Queen as well.\textsuperscript{42} I must quickly add that this is not at all how Carroll himself envisioned these two powerful women when he sketched the designs for his illustrator, John Tenniel (Figure 5.7). In the original designs, the pair inhabit normal bodies.

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It is likely that Tenniel, being more familiar than Carroll with the iconography of illustration, chose a body that would dissociate the two from Queen Victoria and link them to the women whom Victorian science portrayed as sexually defective (Figure 5.8). One of the most curious things about the memorable scene in which the Duchess peppers her baby is the fact that she obviously sports the same dubiously female face her cook does, even though one figure displays the profile and the other offers a frontal view (Figure 5.9). In this way, the scene where they nightmarishly confuse cooking food with feeding babies recalls the scientific positioning of natives in the photograph described earlier (see Figure 5.3). Their resemblance sug-
gests, in other words, that the cook and the Duchess offer two views of a single disfigured body housing cannibalistic desires that cancel out maternal qualities.

In contrast with the other women in the novel, Tenniel drew Alice with the contours of a salon body, which he distorted whenever appetite seized control of her. Thus she could pass out of the original designs, where Carroll sketched her in a pose reminiscent of Ophelia, and into the Tenniel illustration without undergoing any such grotesque transformation (Figure 5.10). The Tenniel illustrations make it absolutely clear that there are only two kinds of women in Wonderland: women who control themselves and others who do not. This celebrated work of children's literature required children of the literate classes to imagine the body as something already out of control, something always in need of regulation. Thus Alice collaborated with many other Victorian genres to generate a fear of becoming someone or something else, a fear by which a culture indelibly brands subjects as its own.

Atonistic Objects

In Alice's memorable farewell to Wonderland, "You're nothing but a pack of cards!" Carroll's enchanting tale of childhood could be said to echo Marx's sentiments about the status of objects under the conditions of late capitalism in "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret." Here, Marx imagines a moment in the history of industrial cultures when the natural relation between people and things undergoes an inversion, and people are consequently dominated by the things they produce. Human desire ceases to determine what things are under these circumstances, and things determine what people want to buy. In this respect, his prediction of the mysterious power objects will acquire under conditions of late capitalism resembles their behavior in the fantasy Carroll attributes to a child. But while pointing out this resemblance may establish a historical relationship between the British obsession with childhood sexuality, especially that of little girls, and the new commodity culture, it does not link this peculiar turn in the history of sexuality with imperialism, at least not in an explicit way.45

Writing is the missing link. Arjun Appadurai offers one explanation for the relationship between Western insistence that words can dominate things, on the one hand, and our equally tenacious assumption that subjects have to dominate objects, on the other:

Contemporary Western common sense, building on various historical traditions in philosophy, law, and natural science, has a strong tendency to oppose "words" and "things." Though this was not always the case even in the West, . . . the powerful contemporary tendency is to regard the world of things as inert and mute, set in motion and animated, indeed knowable, only by persons and their words.46

Subjects dominate objects through words. Words—presumably our words—endow the object with a name and thus a place in a differential system composed of such objects. Is it not the point of commodification to displace objects with the signs of those objects, signs that in turn endow them with an abstract relation value? Such inscription ought to set objects in motion and yet lend them complete legibility, judging by both Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Marx's description of the commodity fetish, however, quite the reverse proves to be true. In both accounts, objects elude human control and begin to manipulate the consumer. The problem, as Marx contended, lies not in any magical properties of the object but in the consumer's limited ability to read it. How such illegibility might arise at the very core of modern culture should become clear upon recalling a point from my previous chapter.

In the discussion of internal colonialism I emphasized the photograph's ability to reduce the dense semiotic texture of a local object or individual to a relatively predictable set of visual features, including the striped "peasant" dress, thick work shoes, and curious implements of labor. Stripped of utilitarian value, these objects did not go quietly into obsolescence but entered into the new commodities market with a noticeable jolt. Though removed from the symbolic econo-
mies in which their use gave them meaning and value, such objects nevertheless carried that history with them as they were taken up and reclassified within the metropolitan marketplace. As commodities, they circulated messages that turned the criteria for their own selection into a complicated game of prestige involving experts from the art world, scholars, and dealers, as well as women with money to spend and homes to decorate. According to Appadurai, most explanations of commodity culture stop with what "Baudrillard sees as the emergence of the 'object,' that is, as a thing that is no longer just a product or a commodity, but essentially a sign in a system of signs of status." Alice is only one of several indications that such a system is far more complex and less stable than accounts of reification, simulation, or the society of spectacle generally allow.

To be sure, as things poured into the European metropolis from the four corners of the world, they were selected and arranged so as to maintain status distinctions peculiar to domestic Britain. Their placement within the categories of the well-appointed household did not, however, succeed in canceling out previous meanings embedded in those objects as they migrated from periphery to core, often with several stops along the way. Just because the commodification process tended to obscure that history, it could not prevent those objects from containing such a record as their material composition. Nor did commodification successfully prevent such objects from communicating something of that history. When one is unfamiliar with the kind of thinking that characterizes life at the periphery, commodification makes such information difficult to receive, and objects can seem illegible as a result. This at least seems to be the case of many of the objects Alice encounters in Wonderland. Carroll takes great delight in pushing the commodification process one step further, as he asks his reader to imagine familiar cultural objects as the creatures of an unfamiliar nature. As if born for the baking dish, whittings have their tails in their mouths, but they nevertheless manage to swim. Croquet balls roll when snacked with a mallet, only to turn into hedgehogs and scurry away. The Mock Turtle is simply a turtle who has been so subjected to mockery as to doubt his sense of identity as a turtle. Indeed, there is nothing in the British household that cannot undergo the inverse cultural logic that would relocate that object in an atavistic wonderland. This tendency of things to revert from nouns back into verbs and take on the agency reserved for human subjects is not so much Carroll’s way of indicating Alice’s immaturity as a reader as it is his way of demonstrating that the reigning domestic categories were barely able to contain the kind of information saturating the visual field around even this most coddled of readers.

Let us suppose a culture in which objects have to be kept under control. Let us suppose further that its ability to contain and classify objects is the basis for a culture’s authority over those objects, thus over the people who make and consume them as well. What would happen, then, if occult objects began to flood into that culture from all over the Empire—if not strange objects, then parts of objects and new materials of which any object might be made, made perhaps by strange hands and in exotic places. These objects would no doubt appear to arrive at the household by way of the department store after a long, discontinuous, and apparently arbitrary process that succeeded in destabilizing all sense of the material value of things and of the labor it took to make them. Under these particular circumstances, objects could suddenly acquire a mysterious value which one nevertheless had to translate into the status distinctions of polite society or else risk disruption of that status quo, much as Alice imagines she has done and must therefore trade places with the unfortunate Mable with her meager house and inferior education. Objects seemed to grow dangerous, in other words; as their value became increasingly legible as social currency. Alice’s dream replicates this transformation of objects in the imperial marketplace. Thus, at the simplest level, Carroll’s story offered an intricate language of objects for making class distinctions. Not only did it tell adults that such a language was the stuff of fantasy life requiring interventions on the part of literary realism—hence the frame tale that redefines Alice’s adventures as children’s fiction—the story also made that language available to successive generations of children.
If the story was indeed produced under the circumstances I have imagined, what, then, does it say about the relationship between such a little girl and British imperialism? For one thing, it tells us that the female body is in some sense the object of objects, the objectification of the code that regulates them all. For it is Alice’s relation to her body that determines the relation of subjects to objects prevailing not only in Wonderland but presumably also in the household that will someday quite literally mirror her taste. Though contained within a framework marking it as make-believe, the story nevertheless implies that sense itself—the ability of words to dominate things—depends entirely on Alice’s ability to dominate an appetite that seems to be the most direct expression of the body itself. As I have argued, the jar of marmalade is as much the sign of dangerous appetite as of the taste that controls it. For taste to exist, then, appetite must already be present, not in contradiction with taste but as another position along a single continuum of desire. Just as we know the Duchess and her cook cannot advance along that continuum and become a girl like Alice, we also know that Alice is capable of back-sliding and taking on features of their distorted figures.

It would appear that a whole range of cultural practices from nursery to department store worked in concert to produce a desire for objects that appeared irrational to the degree that those objects were illegible. As objects were cut off from the history of their production and exchange, taste became less tangible. And as taste became less apparent in things themselves, the quality of objects was transferred onto the consumer. Advertisers consequently began to market their products in terms of such qualities as the female consumer’s “belonging, sex appeal, power, distinction, health, togetherness, camaraderie.” By a certain point in our own century, “she” had clearly become the object they were selling. Alice lets us in near the beginning of this process. She shows us that no desire for the goods of the Empire was ever free of danger, because that desire was located in women. There it took the form of an appetite capable of effacing gender, race, and class; it defined her body as one that could at any time undergo the loss of these distinctions. Any visual evidence of desire was thus destined to produce fear—not only fear in the body of a woman who aspired to middle-class taste, but fear of resembling other women who did not embody British self-control.

Eroticizing Africa

It might be possible to underestimate the negative effect of what had obviously become a free-floating image—one whose history was as obscure as those of the commodities among which it circulated—were my argument to remain within the domain of women and children. In order to see how both masculinity and political policy depended on this development in the feminine and psychological domain, it is useful to look briefly at H. Rider Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines. “This novel came off the press in London in September 1885,” William Minter tells us, “only six months after the European powers met in Berlin to set the rules for dividing up Africa. An instant success, it sold 31,000 copies in Britain and went through thirteen U.S. editions in the first year alone.” Dedicated “to all the big and little boys who read it,” Haggard’s novel helps to explain where men fit into the psychosexual formation I have been describing; it demonstrates exactly what kind of male is defined in relation to the double-bodied woman who shaped so much of Victorian culture.

To eat in Haggard’s Africa is to depend on a woman incapable of nurture. Even when the land yields the necessities of life, that food is also likely to poison Englishmen. It is in such terms that the narrator describes discovering a spring named the “pan of bad water” after days of parched existence in the desert:

How it came to be in such a strange place we did not stop to inquire, nor did we hesitate at its black and uninviting appearance. It was water, or a good imitation of it, and that was enough for us. We gave a bound and a rush, and in another second were all down on our stomachs sucking up the uninviting fluid as if it were nectar fit for the gods.
Even water is black in Africa. Consuming it simultaneously revitalizes and endangers the white adventurers, who grow at once more masculine and less European. As the narrator explains to his English readership, "You, my reader, who have only to turn on a couple of taps and summon 'hot' and 'cold' from an unseen vasty boiler, can have little idea of the luxury of that muddy wallow in brackish, tepid water" (288). Self-restraint makes all the difference, as Conrad would argue within fifteen years or so, in determining whether such moments of his (quite literal) incorporation of Africa will invigorate or corrupt the European.

This becomes particularly apparent when the heroes arrive at another moment of crisis while crossing the frozen mountain peaks that stand between them and the ancient road to Solomon's mines. With what strength remains to them before death by starvation, the Englishmen manage to kill "a great buck." Lacking the fuel with which to cook it, they have to eat raw meat or die. It is with some embarrassment that the narrator recalls this scene for the reader: "It sounds horrible enough, but, honestly, I never tasted anything so good as that raw meat" (296). He offers the fact of their renewal as proof that it was right for the Englishmen to consume this flesh: "In a quarter of an hour we were changed men. Our life and our vigor came back to us, our feeble pulses grew strong again, and the blood went coursing through our veins" (296). The scarcity of Africa may strike us as an antithetical condition to the surplus of consumable items that greets Alice in Wonderland. As one Englishman tells the others, "starving men must not be fainciful" (296). Nevertheless, unregulated eating can be fatal to the bodies of Englishmen in Africa as well. "Mindful of the results of over-feeding on starving stomachs," the narrator invokes the first principle of good taste that is also essential to self-preservation in Alice's world: "we were careful not to eat too much, stopping while we were still hungry" (296). To remain an English girl, Alice must master her own appetite. To remain English men, this band of buddies must not only squeeze a living from the barren landscape of Africa, they must also conquer a bloodthirsty woman. In contrast with Alice, their problem lies outside rather than within the English body.

Although the narrator, Quatermain, promises, "there is not a petticoat in the whole history" (243), this lack of petticoats does not mean an absence of women. For Haggard, the absence of petticoats simply means a lack of women who are properly clothed, a lack, that is, of proper Englishwomen. Indeed, the presence of another kind of woman permeates the entire story, and the villains of the tale bear the same female defects first discovered by the earliest social scientists and captured by nineteenth-century photographers. These are the terms in which the narrator recalls his initial impression of the witch, Gagool, terms that elsewhere in the culture distinguished whores and madwomen from decent people. In a scene resembling Jane Eyre's first glimpse of Rochester's "mad, bad and embruted" wife, Quatermain observed the wizened, monkey-like figure creeping up from the shadow of the hut. It crept on all fours, but when it reached the place where the king sat it rose upon its feet, and, throwing the furry covering off its face, revealed a most extraordinary and weird countenance. It was (apparently) that of a woman of great age, so shrunken that in size it was no larger than that of a year-old child, and was made up of a collection of deep, yellow wrinkles. Set in the wrinkles was a sunken slit, that represented the mouth, beneath which the chin curved outward to a point. There was no nose to speak of; indeed, the whole countenance might have been taken for that of a sun-dried corpse had it not been for a pair of large black eyes, still full of fire and intelligence, which gleamed and played . . . like jewels in a charnel-house. (320-321)

Whereas the African male is black and often admirable by virtue of his maleness, Gagool is yellow, a degenerate shade of black that cods her body within Orientalism. Her gender and age disappear in the
paradox of the ancient fetus. Like the ugly women in Carroll’s narrative, her body provides a space within which the difference between male and female disintegrates, along with the difference between adult and child. As women do in *Alice’s Adventures*, she enjoys exercising a form of power over her subjects that is murderously antithetical to the maternal role. Men who share her power take on “cruel and sensuous” feminine features, indicating that they share her degeneracy as well (317).

To arrive at the point where they actually confront and overcome this woman, three English adventurers have to travel across a landscape mapped out in much the same sexual terms as Gagool’s body. “I am rendered impotent even before its memory,” the narrator confesses. “There straight before us, were two enormous mountains...shaped exactly like a woman’s breasts” (286). According to the map left to them by a Portuguese adventurer who perished centuries before in search of the mines, the Englishmen must cross a scorching desert and then scale pinnacles that resemble “a woman’s breasts” but are in fact a pair of “extinct volcanoes” (287). Those who manage to surmount these treacherous peaks descend into territory dominated by homicidal witches before reaching the cave that guards the entrance to the fabled diamond mines.

Lest his readers fail to grasp the heavy-handed symbolism, Haggard provides a map to help them visualize the terrain across which his heroes were traveling—his version of the unconquered territory to the north of the Transvaal in South Africa (Figure 5.11). The map represents this territory as a female figure. According to the logic of this figure, the incredible wealth within the belly of Africa draws men across a supine female body, enticing them into an opening which could be either the mouth or the genitals and being either is implicitly both at once. One cannot help noting the resemblance between the map and the body of Gagool, whose eyes “gleamed and played...like jewels in a charnel-house.” Both point to the enticing secrets contained within the female body of Africa, knowledge of which is likely to prove lethal for the Europeans. Given the fact that he saw fit to give Africa itself the same body that Europe had given to mad-

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women and whores, we can well imagine why Haggard brought his story to a close by killing off most of its women as well as the men who had fallen under their spell. In so doing, the story asks its readers to imagine bringing order to another people by containing the source of conflict within a female body and bringing that body under masculine control.

**Occidentalism**

In describing the poetics of this body of cultural material, I am arguing for the power of visual representation, a power that only certain images acquire, those of the most banal sort. Modern historiography makes it much easier to understand how Europeans represented Africans and Asians than how bits and pieces of those representations circulated back and forth between fact and fiction to redefine the white middle-class person. Nevertheless, from what we have seen of the exchange between England and its others, it seems altogether possible that an entire class of people—not only authors and intellectuals, but all manner of readers as well as writers—eventually understood who they were as Europeans in relation to an imaginary woman. And in thinking of other cultures in terms of her dark and powerful body, these people deemed themselves peculiarly fit to govern Asia and Africa. A paper published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* for 1869 attributes the unrivaled success of English colonies to the fact that British men were so capable of self-regulation. The report allows that in the “French love of family kind, their cherishing of home ties, their somewhat patriarchal simplicity of life, there is much to admire, much for Englishmen to imitate.” But, the author continues, “in the utter absence amongst the French of the vital self governing principle, there is, I apprehend, the fatal source of national stagnation.” If the French lack of self-regulation made them inferior to the English, still their reverence for the family placed the French well above the peoples whom they colonized. While the logic contained in popular images of the female body exalted the national character of each imperial nation, it actually extended beyond nationalism, as the quotation implies, to produce a similar form of male bonding throughout middle-class Europe, bonding that was necessary for empire.

*King Solomon’s Mines* locates England’s superiority over Africa not only in the Englishman’s capacity for self-regulation but also in the bond between men. There is never any question in the novel that the homosocial bond is a more important and exalted one than heterosexual love. Cultures where women mix into politics are primitive cultures whose women are markedly unfeminine. The domesticity of European women in turn testifies to the advanced state of its culture. Such a basis for national superiority certainly was used to justify the political subordination of women. In making them politically dependent on men, however, the same logic made masculinity symbolically and psychologically dependent on women. Thus each of Haggard’s heroes must have a woman in his past. By telling us that marriageable women existed long ago and far away, he assures the reader that no “petticoat” will deflect the emotion fusing the three highly individuated men into a single heroic character. At every turn, the perpetuity of the state and the health of the culture depend entirely on maintaining homosocial devotion. But as the ubiquity of bad and ugly women in the tale suggests, such devotion in turn requires their presence along with the absence of English women. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has been helpful in describing this triangulated configuration as one in which the woman is absolutely necessary. The degraded double of the ideal English woman ensures that the bond among family-minded men remains strong even when they are far away from home. Women of dusky flesh at once embody erotic desire and reduce it to the sordid thrill of gazing. The tales of imperial conquest resemble the photography of whores, madwomen, and natives in that their characteristic maps, pictorial landscapes, and richly detailed description of other peoples inscribed another culture with messages that made it intelligible to Europeans. With seeing, furthermore, came knowing, and with knowing, a sense of themselves as subjects over and above the objects of such a gaze. The eroticism adhering to the disfigured surface of other bodies pro-
duced the desire to look at and know those bodies, a desire that only reinforced the homosocial bond. This desire materialized in a figure that bonded fantasy to realism, a popular image of what could not be realized within British culture without challenging the autonomy of that culture as well as its continuity in time.

By reminding us that objects are neither inert nor speechless, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* seems to offer readers a very different moral to its story. If we feel that objects have gained unprecedented power over subjects in this story, it is perhaps because they do, as Carroll suggests, have the power to classify us as fit for certain social spaces. And if in fact the messages those objects convey offer, in the form of a desirable object, a self that we desire to be, then we have to question the difference between the subjects we believe we are and the image-objects that make it possible for us to see ourselves that way. *Alice* will not allow the reader to imagine middle-class culture either without a dazzling array of unrelated objects or without men and women convinced that their status as subjects has something to do with their ability to classify and control that world of objects. Indeed, the survival of boy as well as girl protagonists depends on their ability to manage images. Not only must they decode the bewildering array of visual information that comes with the foreign messages accompanying commodities, on the one hand, and the cultural inscription on a foreign landscape, on the other; they must also be seen in certain ways by other observers. Thus Alice frequently verges on homicide, and the band of brothers display signs of a physical strength they do not in fact possess.

These resemblances to their brutally degenerate counterparts, led, in both cases, by a vicious woman, are performed in the service of difference. If Alice demonstrates that an enlarged or distorted body is, like her appetite, not really her own, then Haggard’s little tribe of Englishmen confirm the fact that brains, honor, and commitment to one another are more powerful than any use of force. The manipulation of images in defiance of the laws of realism serves in both cases to bring those images under the control of words—in the form of the stories themselves—that are contained within and dominated by the very categories of realism against which children’s literature only seems to be rebelling. By playing with images, the modern individual acquires mastery over things, not the least of which is his or her own body.
picturesque offers no ready symmetries, no easily identifiable compositional schemes. Recognizing and appreciating these qualities is an important achievement for the adept of the picturesque, perhaps even the decisive achievement in the process of learning to see. In short, the picturesque is also a didactic principle” (108).


37. Jacques Derrida begins his analysis of the issue of “truth” in Van Gogh’s “shoe painting” with this remark: “we’ve got a ghost story on our hands here all right,” The Truth in Painting, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 257. Derrida describes Meyer Shapiro’s critique of Heidegger’s reading of the shoes as a conflict between two different ways of returning the pair of shoes to an absent owner. To say “the shoes of” is much the same as saying “the ghost of” in this analysis. Another clearly related question arises from the fact that the shoes both do and do not appear in the photographs I have been discussing. The Scottish fisher girl is marked as a fake, for example, because she is obviously in someone else’s shoes, which automatically shifts our attention away from the owner of those shoes and onto the flesh that has no right to fill them; the truth of the model would become visible only in a pornographic image that removed all the clothing that is not hers, clothing that appears to have no rightful owner. Her “truth” exists in opposition to that of respectable women, which becomes visible only in portraits that display their economic status and quality of taste in the clothing that belongs to them—that indeed is their body—or, alternatively, in spirit photographs where the body indicates the absence of any flesh at all.

38. My discussion of miniaturization is indebted to Susan Stewart’s On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

39. The problem with naming the people who were not doing the classifying is that I must to some degree reproduce the very classification system I am describing. I refer to these people alternately as “natives,” “indigenous peoples,” “local” or “regional” populations, and occasionally “ethnics,” when they were in fact British people.


41. Ibid., 10.

5 SEXUALITY IN THE AGE OF REALISM

1. Of particular importance in this regard was the rise of physical anthropology championed in England by the Anthropological Society of London. In Victorian Anthropology (New York: Macmillan, 1987), George W. Stocking, Jr., explains how the publication of Darwin’s The Origin of Species in 1859 changed what had been the prevailing theory of racial difference first elaborated by J. C. Prichard in 1808. Prichard rejected polygenesis, or the theory of multiple origins for man, in order to maintain the absolute difference between man and animal. He used the concept of degeneration to account for the variety of bodies that human beings inhabited and the very different cultural traditions they practiced. Challenging this monogenetic position were those who saw, as Robert Knox wrote in The races of men: A philosophical enquiry into the influences of race over the destinies of Nations (1850), that “no good reason exists for regarding man as a distinct creation from the living world” (quoted in Stocking, 69). On the basis of physical evidence, polygenists argued that different races had originated from different centers of creation and remained unchanged through most of human history. Different races assimilated to each other’s climates only with difficulty, according to this view, and interbred infrequently. From these inferences, they concluded that mankind was not one but several species. Darwin’s theory of evolution challenged the twin assumptions that man began as many species that had subsequently remained much the same, but post-Darwinian anthropology nonetheless retained many aspects of polygenesis: “the emphasis on classification in biological terms; the correlation of physical type and cultural achievement; the incorporation of a static racial hierarchy into a dynamic evolutionary sequence; the rejection of [the biblical] assumption [that man differed from the rest of nature]; and the insistence that man be studied as part of the natural world” (183). Stocking summarizes Darwin’s impact on Victorian anthropology in these terms: “In the beginning, black savages and white savages had been psychologically one. But while white savages were busily acquiring superior brains in the course of cultural progress, dark-skinned savages had remained back near the beginning. Although united in origin with the rest of mankind, their assumed inferiority of culture and capacity now reduced them to the status of missing links in the evolutionary chain. Their cultural forms, although at the center of anthropological attention, . . . [were studied] in order to cast light on the processes by which the ape had developed into the British gentleman” (185). For an account of this attempt to formulate an all-encompassing paradigm linking biological superiority to European features, see Ronald Rengner, “Race, Politics, and Science: The Anthropological Society in the 1860s,” Victorian Studies 22 (1978): 51–70.

2. Edward Said’s Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1979) is still the exemplary study of this imaginary relationship. Orientalism, according to Said, was a project that “kept intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability.” Though mainly a product of scholarship, he maintains, Orientalism nevertheless saw to it that “the Orient existed as a place isolated from
the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts, and commerce" (206).


4. Ibid., 43.

5. Mary Louise Pratt uses the term "contact zone" to refer to "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. I borrow the term 'contact' here from its use in linguistics, where the term contact language refers to improved languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in contact of trade. . . . Like the societies of the contact zone, such languages are commonly regarded as chaotic, barbarous, lacking in structure." Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.


7. Katie Trumpener argues that "during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Britain conquered, colonized, and consolidated a vast new empire in North America, Asia, Australia, and Africa. Its formation was anticipated by, then meshed with, the formation of Britain as the 'United Empire of Great Britain and Ireland.' The modern British state, as Michael Hechter has influential argued, resulted from the internal colonization of Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, building its economic strength on the systematic underdevelopment and impoverishment of these domestic colonies. One British imperialism produces another. The conquest and administration of domestic colonies served as a trial run for the colonization of the overseas empire," Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 249. Although I agree with this formulation up to a point, I believe the stress should be placed on the difference between the two arenas of colonization and the forms of racism they required.

8. One notable instance of such a reaction occurs in the closing pages of Descent of Man, and Natural Selection in Relation to Sex, vol. II, ed. John Tyler Boulter and Robert M. May (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1871; rpt. 1981), as Charles Darwin turns against his own theory of evolution and renounces his relation to primitive man in these phobic terms: "As for my own part I would rather be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or from that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his younger comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions" (404–405). Here, in concluding Descent, Darwin shifts briefly and hysterically from the monogenist view of man he held throughout his work to something like a polygenist view whereby European man might descend from the ape independently of his African and Oceanic counterparts.


10. In The Rhetoric of British India (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 10, Sara Suleri explains how what began as an ethnographic master plan—The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations with Descriptive Letter Press of the Races and the Tribes of India (published serially between 1868 and 1875)—turned out to be "a model of alterity so explosively multifarious that the invading race itself is threatened to be subsumed into [the] powerlessness [of those it has subordinated]. Rather than supply the invader with a key to a system of cultural control, caste represents the symbolic invisibility of the peoples of India, and the disempowering fear that the colonizer cannot function as the other to a colonized civilization that had long since learned to accommodate a multiplicity of alterities into the fabric of its cultures."


13. Henry Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor vol. IV (New York: Dover, 1968) provides an excellent demonstration of how criminology interlaced conceptually with the anthropological study of primitive cultures. Less than ten pages into his study of the criminal types comprising the category of "those who will not work," Mayhew felt curiously compelled to define prostitution and provide an encyclopedic description of all its varieties from ancient times to the present day in all the countries of the world: "The general design of this inquiry will be to draw a view of the position occupied by the female sex in different ages and countries, to measure the estimation in which it is held, to fix the accepted standard of morality, to ascertain the recognised significance of the marriage contract, the laws relating to polygamy and concubinage, the value at which feminine virtue and modesty were held, and thus to consider the prostitute in relation to the system of which she formed a part" (57). In this way, Mayhew's research extended the use of a particular brand of heterosexual monogamy from criminalizing the English underclasses to primitivizing other cultures. Simply put, he converted the particular way in which his culture classified women into a universal system for evaluating human beings.

28. In “Gender, Race, and Nation,” Deviant Bodies, ed. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla, Anne Fausto-Sterling asks why nineteenth-century scientists were so preoccupied with the physical features distinguishing Hottentot women, since “the peoples whom the early Dutch explorers named Hottentot had been extinct as a coherent cultural group since the late 1600s.” Fausto-Sterling investigates the process by which an African woman named Sarah Bartmann was during her life and after her death in 1815 classified as alternately Hottentot and Bushwoman by Georges Cuvier’s relatively conscientious dissection and comparison of her body to those of other racially marked women. “Human racial difference,” Fausto-Sterling concludes, “while in some sense obvious and therefore ‘real,’ is in another sense pure fabrication, a story written about the social relations of a particular historical time and then mapped onto available bodies” (21).


31. In the colonies, the European prostitute created a special kind of categorical confusion. Margaret Macmillan writes: “Although a speaker at a meeting on ‘Social Evil’ in Bombay in 1891 congratulated himself that there was not a single English girl among them, it was feared that Indians might not be able to see the distinction. Not surprisingly, there was also concern in official and unofficial circles over pornography that involved European women.” Women of the Raj (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 53.

33. Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (New York: New American, 1960). All citations are to this edition and are identified by page numbers in the text.

34. In “Falling Alice, Fallen Women, and Victorian Dream Children,” *Carroll Studies* 6 (1982): 46–64, Nina Auerbach has described this fall as “a loving parody of Genesis” and linked it to Alice’s appetite.


37. In *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 42, Rémy G. Saissetin offers a useful encapsulation of the historical forces that made possible this regendering—and thus the restaging—of consumption: “For the first time in history the women of the bourgeoisie found themselves free and with leisure time, whereas formerly they had tended to stay at home and participate in the economic life of the household. The capital accumulation of the nineteenth century made it possible for women of this class to enjoy a certain leisure, leave their interiors, and lead a form of aristocratic life modeled on that of the old nobility. The men worked to assure the women the possibility of conspicuous consumption. This contrast of occupations between men and women was manifest even in their dress: the masculine fashions remained sober, economic, puritan even, while the feminine costume or dress was allowed to be courtly, that is, colorful, luxurious, flowing, impractical, expensive, decorative. Women set the fashion rather than men as had been the case in the old courtly society.”

38. As Thomas Richards explains, “the consumer was queen and the queen was a consumer, and festivals like the Jubilee served to dramatize that monarch and commoner alike were equals in the eyes of the market.” *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, 165.

39. Elaborating the ways in which art collaborated with commercialism to woo the female shopper, Rémy Saissetin declares that “the entire machine of the store—the architecture, special displays, special sales and events—was directed to one end: the seduction of woman. It was the modern devil tempting the modern Eve.” *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot*, 99.


41. In *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830* (London: Routledge, 1987), Frank Mort argues that a double standard in sexual conduct for men and women shaped the new sexology whereby male continence was desirable but could not be guaranteed because of the strength of the male urge (79). What could be guaranteed was female purity and therefore their impurity as well. Around mid-century, he explains, this “had a profound effect on class-specific forms of male sexuality . . . Both written and visual pornography represented women for the male gaze across the virtue/vice, innocence/depravity oppositions. The clearest examples were in the early photographic studies of child prostitutes dating from the 1860s and 1870s, where childhood innocence was erotically framed against visible signs of immoral sexuality, such as exposed genitalia or the depraved stare” (84). These and other examples, he continues, “reveal a link between the growing polarization of official definitions of female sexuality and the sexualization of those representations in the fantasies of certain groups of men” (86). Particularly germane to my argument, first, is Mort’s description of child pornography as a genre that transplants the features of the other woman (exposed genitalia and a depraved stare) onto its very antithesis, the English girl. Second is his use of the double figure of the woman to explain how male desire was historically deflected away from marriageable English women and onto women with whom it was culturally impossible to mate.

42. For a discussion of possible sources for the Duchess illustrations, see Michael Hancher, *The Tenniel Illustrations to the “Alice” Books* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), 41–47. I am indebted to Hancher’s study for a number of my observations concerning the Alice illustrations, especially the contrast between Carroll’s sketches for *Alice’s Adventures under Ground* and Tenniel’s illustrations for *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

43. In *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), Anne Laura Stoler contends that Foucault established this link at several points in his work: “within Foucault’s frame, bourgeois identities in both metropole and colony emerge tacitly and emphatically coded by race. Discourses of sexuality do more than define the distinctions of the bourgeois self; in identifying marginal members of the body politic, they have mapped the moral parameters of European nations. These deeply sedimented discourses on sexual morality could redraw the ‘interior frontiers’ of national communities, frontiers that were secured through—and sometimes in collision with—the boundaries” (7).


45. Ibid., 45.

with my reading of Wonderland. Demonstrating that the absolute gap between the commodity’s form and its physicality is not consistently present in “The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret,” McLaughlin observes: “With regard to its exchangers, the commodity is independent and in fact sovereign: it controls its exchangers. This leads to a very strange situation. As soon as one’s labor product becomes a commodity, as soon as one ceases to be a producer (or a user) and becomes an exchanger, there is a reversal of roles. The human producer is no longer in the position of authority or sovereignty with respect to what used to be his or her product. With the change to exchanger, it is as though one were transformed from a parent into a child—a child, in fact, of one’s own ‘orphan[ed product]’” (11).


49. H. Rider Haggard, *Three Adventure Novels: She, King Solomon’s Mines, Allan Quatermain* (New York: Dover, 1951), 287–288. All citations to *King Solomon’s Mines* are to this edition and are identified by page numbers in the text.


51. Wayne Koestenbaum has discussed the homosocial erotics of Haggard’s writing for the “boy-reader” who was “often a grown man” (151–161). Koestenbaum suggests that the rise of pure romance by male authors in the latter half of the nineteenth century offered “a refuge not only from women’s fiction, but from an England that they imagined Queen Victoria had feminized.” *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (New York: Routledge, 1986), 155. Such writing obviously served the interests of empire as it asserted the manliness of men who were attached to each other by representing the bond between men as that which held the empire together.

52. In her critique of Gareth Stedman Jones’s *Languages of Class*, Joan Scott demonstrates that Chartism was in part defeated by the unconscious sexism of its rhetoric. Scott writes, “The ‘language’ of class, as Chartists spoke it, placed women (and children) in auxiliary and dependent positions. If women mounted speakers’ platforms, organized consumer boycotts, and founded special societies of their own, they did so under the Chartist aegis to demand male suffrage and thus assert property rights that came to them through their husbands’ and fathers’ labor.” *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 64–65. The Chartists acceded to the middle-class concept of gender, in other words, when they made a deal to remove women from the labor pool and base their political rights on the fact that ownership of one’s labor entitles one to political rights because it defines one as male. Economic dependency is automatically feminizing within such a frame of reference—feminizing and politically disenfranchising at once.

53. Eve Sedgwick argues that the kind of anxiety animating late nineteenth-century fiction was a precondition for the kind of bonding that could maintain an empire. For such anxiety, she says, the term is ‘homophobia.’ In the English Gothic novel, the possibility—the attraction, the danger—of simply dropping the female middle term becomes an explicit, indeed an obsession. It becomes a much more tightly organized, openly prescriptive approach to sexuality and homosocial bonding.” *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 82.

6 AUTHENTICITY AFTER PHOTOGRAPHY

1. I borrow this term from the title of Andreas Huyssen’s *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986).


3. Ibid., 190.

4. Ibid.

5. If any one critical work can be credited with establishing this double antagonism beyond any shadow of a doubt, it would have to be Andreas Huyssen’s “Mass Culture as Woman,” in *After the Great Divide*, 22–62.

