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Kanchanakesi Channa Prajapati Warnapala

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"A CONTESTED SIGHT/ SITE": BRITISH CONSTRUCTIONS OF CEYLON IN VISUAL AND LITERARY TEXTS, 1850-1910

By

Kanchanakesi Channa Prajapati Warnapala

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ABSTRACT

"A CONTESTED SIGHT/ SITE": BRITISH CONSTRUCTIONS OF CEYLON IN VISUAL AND LITERARY TEXTS, 1850-1910

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Kanchanakesi Channa Prajapati Warnapala

This dissertation explores the problematic construction of colonial Ceylon in the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in the context of colonial transaction, and provides a nuanced account of how the colonial perspective in Ceylon can be theorized. Wresting the theorizing of colonial representation of Ceylon away from the dominance of a patriarchal, euro-centric and hetero sexist framework, this study opens up new perspectives on issues such as colonial vision, representation, the gaze, the picturesque, race and gender in Ceylon. The heart of this dissertation lies in a three-part argument. First, Ceylon is recast as a dynamic site of gendered and racial interaction. Second, the perspective of the colonizer is shown to be far more complex and entangled than a schema of a simple colonizer/colonized identity will allow. Third, marginalized voices and subjectivities are investogated within white representational practices in Ceylon, highlighting conflicting viewpoints which are frequently silenced and made peripheral.

In order to theorize the colonial perspective in Ceylon outside of an ethnographic, orientalist and exoticist narrative, the first chapter reexamines Julia Margaret Cameron's Ceylonese photographs, exploring ways in which images of local women complicate romantic fictions which surround Victorian discourses of Ceylon. Chapter two investigates how the issue of gender ambiguity of Sinhalese men

in British representations disrupts notions of colonial masculinity, allowing white Victorian women artists and travel writers to construct alternative sites/sights. Chapter three argues that the picturesque cannot constitute an ideological frame through which the island can be described as it is fractured by a series of competing gazes which operate in Ceylon. The fourth chapter retrieves local voices that contend with orientalist discourses of Ceylon in an ambivalent manner, to demonstrate that multiple determinations complicate local reactions, revealing fraught sites of local self-fashioning. This study concludes by examining postcolonial re-articulations of Ceylon and asking whether a residue of the colonial persists in the present postcolonial context, when colonial paradigms continue into contemporary depictions of Sri Lanka.

To my parents

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Introduction

Reading Julia Margaret Cameron's Portrait of the Colonial Artist

In 1877, Marianne North, an English botanical artist, travels to Ceylon on one of her numerous naturalist expeditions, and visits Julia Margaret Cameron, an English photographer, who resides in Kalutara at the time. North's visit provides Cameron the opportunity to capture the likeness of the artist in one of many of her photographic experiments in the colonies. In fact North provides the only existing account of Cameron's photographic practices in the colonies. A successful photographer in England, Cameron seems not to have abandoned her photographic work; she avidly photographs the Ceylonese, as documented by North herself. North describes how Cameron's house in Ceylon is cluttered with her numerous photographic experiments and previously taken photographs.[1]

Yet, of all the 26 surviving photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron taken in Ceylon, the photograph of North is indeed the most intriguing. While almost all of the Ceylonese photographs by Cameron depict the Ceylonese either posing individually or in groups, this particular photograph captures an English woman in the process of picturing a Ceylonese on canvas (fig. 1). It depicts a full-length profile of North at her easel on the terrace of Cameron's house. She is in a long sleeved dress, painting a colonial servant standing in front of her whose ethnic identity as a Tamil is indicated by the mode of dress- a dhoti which he wraps around his loins.[2] The Ceylonese is caught in a three quarter length pose, and is bare-chested, and holds a vessel on his shoulders. North's

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[1] North, in her autobiography, observes the photographs in Cameron's house at Kalutara, and briefly makes reference to her photographic practices in Ceylon. See North, vol. 1, 314-5.

[2] The dhoti or the garment that wraps the boy's lower part of the body is an indication of his Tamil ethnic

back is against the wall of the house, an opened window directly behind her. In the background, a tiled roof is noticeable, held up by concrete pillars, making the bare outline of a garden visible. Light streams in through the garden on to the terrace, setting off the body of the native as well as the dress of North.

Fig. 1. Cameron, Julia Margaret. Marianne North. Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs. Julian Cox and Colin Ford. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003. 489. Slide 1200.

Is it possible that this photograph enacts the multiple power relations inscribed in

identity.

British constructions of colonial Ceylon during the late nineteenth century? Without clear supporting evidence from Cameron, the photographer, we can only speculate about her awareness of various forms of power involved in the construction of the image as well as the contingencies which shape the print. But these speculations are pertinent in opening up the photograph for interrogation. Does this photograph provide a schematic map of how various gazes operate in Ceylon during the late nineteenth century? Does this image reveal provocative vantage points to approach issues of colonial representation such as the representation of the other, the representation of the colonial female artist, the self-representation of the Victorian artist, disruptions in colonial representation and the act of colonial representation?

I want to consider this photograph as very nuanced and layered in signification around issues of race and gender. I will present a reading of the photograph based upon considerations of its racialized and gendered subject matter, the race, gender and class status of the photographer, the socio historical context surrounding the production of the photograph and questions of the colonial gaze and colonial representation which originate through the portrait. This relates to my larger project which is on the issues and strategies of British construction of Ceylon in literary and visual representations in the nineteenth century.

This photograph acts as the main model for how I, the postcolonial viewer, read the colonial representations of Ceylon during the nineteenth century. It offers an entry for analyses of issues of gender, race, power and visuality in the context of cross-cultural representations of Ceylon. Cameron's image allows me to consider how representations of Ceylon can be complicated by a close examination of the interaction between the

viewer and the image, the reader and the text. At stake in this photograph is its complexity, revealing a moment of instability in colonial representation, when it is difficult to decipher the image with only a single viewpoint. I focus on the way in which the image proposes a bewildering range of possible viewing positions the viewer/reader can adopt, contesting the notion of vision as unidirectional as well as the colonial relationship as clear-cut. This photograph allows me to go beyond a colonizer-colonized dialectic and instead focus on the plurality of subject positions available to the viewer, exposing the ambivalences of the colonial image. The multiple perspectives allow me to characterize the complex relationship between the various groups in the photograph. My reading of Cameron's photograph reveals the intricate racial, gendered and sexual dynamics of looking at play in the colonial production of a representation of Ceylon. While I attempt to come up with an interpretive schema for the web of gazes which operates in this photograph, this print will act as a point of departure for me to theorize the ambivalences of cross-cultural representation in Ceylon. My dissertation asks the question: how do I locate the visual and literary history of colonial tensions and disruptions of essentialist categories in the representations of Ceylon? It is my contention that the fashioning of Ceylon in British representations warrants critical scrutiny as the representations are neither univocal nor uncontested. In fact my use of the term "Ceylon" instead of Sri Lanka is deliberate in order to suggest that it is a colonial construction, not a naturalized entity.[3] Therefore, reading as a strategy for analyzing colonial representations will draw attention to moments of conflict and contradiction in British constructions of Ceylon, and help me to open up spaces to theorize the instability of

[3] The term was introduced by the Portuguese in 1505, and was carried forward by both the Dutch and the British. After independence in 1948, "Ceylon" was still used to refer to Sri Lanka till 1972.

colonial productions of Ceylon.

At first glance, Cameron's photograph seemingly attests to an ethnographic project when the boy is staged next to North, placed against a pillar, his partial nakedness further emphasized against the whiteness of the column.[4] North stands confident and imposing, her dark dress constructing her as a forbidding spectacle, while the boy seems submissive and vulnerable in his awkward pose, literally trapped in the photograph, his almost naked body subject to the intrusive colonial gaze. He is aesthetically posed, the vessel, head and arms symmetrically constructing an appealing profile, although the earthenware pot which he balances on his right shoulder, is set uncomfortably against his head. His adolescent body suggests a lack of agency, as he is in an awkward pose, obvious from the manner in which he props up the vessel.

In tones reminiscent of the neoclassical, the photograph ostensibly reinforces the nature/culture binary, when North occupies the sphere of culture as the artist, rendering the primitive body in his natural landscape as a spectacle, a picture or an object on display. The nature/culture binary is further emphasized when one takes into consideration that North was a botanical artist, a quasi scientist who appropriates, documents, and transcribes nature into culture, where environmental spectacles include not only lush vegetation of Ceylon but also native men and women as a part of the landscape. While culture apparently resides in the realm of colonial practice, North, as the botanical artist cum scientist, reinforces the notion of the colonized as specimens of

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[4] While Marianne North is set in profile, the native subject is captured almost in a full frontal although he is turned slightly at an angle, his face at level with the canvas. Anne Maxwell describes how colonial photographers often adopted frontal and side views according to anthropological photographic prescriptions which were concerned with the classification of racially defined bodies. Natives were seen primarily as depictions of a "type" for scientific information rather than individual portrait studies, which required stiff, immobile postures. See Maxwell, 38-72.

nature, if not inhabitants of "othered" cultures. In this instance, the boy is mere physicality, the body to North's mind, a re-inscription of the nature/culture binary within the frame.

While such an alchemical transformation of nature into culture by North, the scientist, seems to reinstate the colonizer/colonized binary in this photograph, what is also significant is that, although North is painting the Ceylonese, they do not face each other. While North sits imperiously, her body erect and taut, her head straight and chin up, the easel being kept almost at a distance away from her body, and her gaze firmly resting on the canvas on to which a representation is being apparently sketched, the boy seems to stand back a little, his body not placed directly in front of her. Her upright self-awareness and the boy's downcast eyes hint at an uncomfortable relationship between the two subjects. They do not interact, suggesting a refusal to acknowledge and confirm each other's presence.

Paradigmatic of the act of colonial representation, North renders the body of the boy without actually engaging with him, her gaze firmly fixed on the canvas. In fact, as Anne Maxwell points out, during colonization, the scientist's gaze was considered distanced and objective, providing "no opportunities for communication" (10). Hence, distance becomes a prerequisite in the representation of the other, as North's elegant Victorian attire, and the stiff manner in which she looms over her object of representation all suggest a division between the Victorian botanical artist and her native subject. Even the way she keeps her distance not only from the Ceylonese but also from the canvas itself are representative of her lack of bodily engagement with the colonized, and perhaps her sheer discomfort with the body of the other.

But while the indexes of the image situate the photograph as an ethnographic print in a colonial context, how do I read the photograph to reveal a different visual politics in Ceylon? Can this image be read so as to avoid a simplistic stereotypical interpretation of the image? How do I read this image in order to emphasize issues of ambiguity and fracture which dominate the print? To this end, Mieke Bal serves as a useful visual theorist, as her narratological model for visual analysis provides me with the critical vocabulary to address the plurality of gazes which intersect this image. Bal's concept of the focaliser provides a schematic map of the manifold gazes, which operate in this photograph.

Bal argues that multiple perspectives are more useful in examining vision than adopting a unified perspective, pointing out that unification renders other important aspects of visuality invisible. She presents the view that "differentiating modes if not kinds of vision--multiplying perspectives, proliferating points of view--may be a more useful strategy for examining the ideological, epistemological and representational implications of dominating modes of vision including their illusory monopoly"(379). Such an analysis which recognizes manifold encounters, negotiations, and contestations taking place within the visual field is important in understanding the complexities of the colonial gaze(s). I hope to illuminate how such a diverse interaction reconfigures the relations between the subject and object of Cameron's photograph as well as that of the colonizer and the colonized.

Bal draws upon Norman Bryson and his concern with the kind of vision which denies "historicity and embodiment and objectifies the contemplated object"(383).[5]

[5] Norman Bryson distinguishes between the gaze and the glance, and argues that while the gaze is "vigilant" and "masterful", the glance is less probing and violent, and is more "a furtive or sideways

Retrieving alternate visions which have the potential to work against patriarchal ones, Bal advances the notion of the "focaliser", "an agent in the work who represents various modes of attention" which offers "positions of viewing to the real viewer" (384). As such focalisers are mediators which allow the viewers to move across the image and fix his or her look in a variety of viewing positions opened up by elements of the image. She argues that they provide a double mediation, as it "mediates between sender and receiver by pausing at the sites of available viewing positions and giving the real viewer the freedom to choose and hence to act" (384). Secondly she points out how such a reading "mediates between discourse and image, because the narrativization of the viewing process that it entails introduces the mobility, the instability, and the sequential temporality of the process of reading" (384). Such an argument for a "complex, historical and politically aware analysis of art" (383) through narrativisation is vital to my reading of Cameron's photograph. Bal stresses "the status of the viewer as reader" (384), once again taking Bryson's idea into account, that "the awareness of one's own engagement in the act of looking entails the recognition that what one sees is a representation, not an objective reality" (384).[6]

Likewise, I too will read the visual images as an interaction between the viewer

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look"(94).

[6] Mieke Bal reads Rembrandt's *Danae* to highlight how the focalisers disrupt a conventional reading of the picture and subvert the meaning. In the *Danae,* the woman's raised hand directs the spectator away from her body to the space that opens beyond. The look of the servant behind the curtain compels the viewer to once again follow her gaze to some place else. The hand, the servant and the winged putto whose hands seem to be tied all act as internal focalisers disrupting the gaze. The woman begins to dominate the spectacle directing both the spectator and the lover she seems to rule. Voyeurism and passive femininity are both disrupted. The focalizer undermines "the asymmetrical gaze...blocking the temptations of voyeurism" (384). Therefore, the very ambiguity read through the focalisers in the painting offers a pluralization of vision that disrupts a patriarchal gaze: "vision can be pluralized so as to deprive the colonizing, patriarchal gaze of its authority" (401). Bal argues that the reading of the image through the focalisers constructs a "masculine viewer whose visual potency is extremely problematic" (387).

and the text in order to theorize the dynamic process involved in the act of looking at a colonial image.[7] I too will take up the position that viewing images is a narrative process when the viewer engages with the "unexamined context" that surrounds each text, gauging the text and reframing it in order to produce alternative meanings. Further, one is compelled not only to acknowledge that the image is constructed around several discourses, but also to recognize that viewing practices are grounded in the politics of looking. That is, the images of the colonized cannot be interpreted without reference to the social and historical context of the viewer. As Bal observes in her essay titled "*Reading Art?*", reading "is an act of reception" and "each viewer can bring her own frame of reference" (298) into the reading of the image. This is reminiscent of Spivak's comment that the position of the investigator (or the viewer) is an inherent part of the process of the critique enacted.[8]

Multiple focalisers are vital in understanding the competing or interacting forms of looking involved in the construction of Cameron's photograph. A variety of conflicting and contradictory discursive frameworks operate simultaneously in this photograph. Each person negotiates for power within a range of race/sex/gender roles when Cameron portrays a representation of a representation of the native by a Victorian woman artist. A plurality of gazes intersects the image as Cameron engineers varied subject positions, thereby challenging the specular economy which gives agency to only

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[7] As Mieke Bal observes in her essay titled "*Reading Art?*", "every act of looking is...a reading, simply because without the processing of signs into syntactic chains that resonate against the backdrop of a frame of reference an image cannot yield meaning"(298). For more on reading images, see Bal's essay titled "Reading Art?" in *A Mieke Bal Reader.*

[8] See Gayatri Spivak's observation that one must engage in a "*historical* critique" of one's "position as the investigating person"(62).

the artist, viewer and subject.

The many internal focalisers present in the picture complicate the act of colonial representation. Although Marianne North acts as the dominant focalizer in the image, the point of view from which a particular mode of viewing is proposed, the boy too acts as an internal focalizer presenting the viewer with an alternative perspective. His look introduces narrativity into the image by transforming him into a character that interacts with the viewer. Even though he averts his gaze, a symbol of submissiveness according to the visual codes of the West, the fact that he directs his gaze elsewhere nevertheless grants him a viewing position. He is positioned so that he faces a space/subject outside the frame, perhaps the photographer rather than the artist within the photograph, though his downcast eyes and slanted head confirm the lack of eye contact even with the photographer. His angled body is slightly turned away from North as North seems to face the visual terrain beyond the terrace. Yet it is ambiguous whether he looks at something else within the photographic frame or if he looks at nothing at all, although his field of vision is certainly restricted by colonial hierarchical conventions. His status as a colonial subject demands that he be subservient to the female colonial artist within and outside the photographic frame.

As Bal points out, proliferating points of view introduce fracture into the photograph when it is unclear who exactly occupies an object position in the photograph. It is not just the native boy who is objectified in the image. At a certain level, North is also objectified, although somewhat differently than the boy in the photograph. While it can be argued that she is endowed with subjectivity as the artist in the photograph whereas the boy is only the object, North herself is a visual object on exhibit, when she is

constructed as a spectacle by Cameron. While the boy stands in shadow, face in darkness, partially concealed by the pot, his upper body in darkness, the silhouette-like staging of North leaving only her figure in focus constructs her as the visual sight. Her static figure is cut up almost like a silhouette, heightening the focus on her body.[9]

The viewer cannot exclusively linger on the body of the boy precisely because he cannot engage with one figure exclusively.[10] The boundary between the two is blurred when both are objectified by the photographer, perhaps hinting at the colonial process implicating both the Ceylonese male as well as the female artist in the colonies. North, the Ceylonese boy and the viewer are all assigned spectatorial positions. Although North too is an object of the viewers' gaze, unable to initiate or return that gaze, she is assigned a spectatorial position, however ambiguous when she is depicted in the act of representation.

While such dynamics add to the complications in this image, Cameron's position too is tenuous. She does not exactly position herself as subject either when the photograph suggests a collapsing of the borders between North, the artist and Cameron, the photographer, through Cameron's linkage with North, an issue to which I will return shortly. Though she is the producer of the colonial image, she is also part of the image when she is appropriated by the viewer. Such dynamics position Cameron in an

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[9] It is ironic that Marianne North's Victorian dress which acts as a cultural marker, a badge of Englishness, further objectifies her in the photograph. Monica Anderson argues that for the nineteenth-century woman traveler, "the extent of her willingness to play by the rules of an imperial center was demonstrated through the clothes she wore" (199). North displays a long sleeved European dress which fully covers her body, leaving only her right hand with which she holds the brush exposed. The viewer is drawn towards the lower portion of her dress which is gathered at her waist leaving the Victorian skirt full and billowing. The skirt of her dress brushes against the stand of her easel, filling her divide of the visual space within the image.

[10] I attribute a gendered male (heterosexual) gaze to the colonial viewer, especially as colonial photography operates within unequal relations of power, where the western male is the target audience of images of colonized men and women.

ambivalent situation, unable to identify completely with either North or the Ceylonese boy, thereby complicating the specular economy which fixes the identity of the photographer as one of agency.

A powerful device of focalization is the direction of light. While both North and the boy are almost immersed in darkness, their features blurred and indiscernible, a torrent of light is focused onto the midsection of the photograph, where a garden is slightly visible. The light actually cuts across the plane of the photograph, almost acting as a dividing mechanism between the artist and her model. It jars any uninterrupted acts of looking. While it hints at Cameron's reluctance to focus exclusively on either the Ceylonese boy or the white woman, it also suggests a deliberate move on the part of Cameron to disrupt the representation itself by looking above and beyond what is pictured.

Both North and the native are set against a background which consists of geometric-like spaces, where rectangular, square and triangulated spaces abound. The rectangular wall and window behind North, the triangular roof and the concrete pillars, in addition to the squares illuminated by Cameron in between the pillars all create an impression of clearly divided spaces. But it is the triangulated spaces that are accentuated the most within the space of the photograph which seem to allude to the disruptions of representation. The triangles act as focalisers when they guide the viewer to distinct spaces, spaces that are geometrically defined. They hint at interlocking spaces, confined and compressed, each space/fragment refusing to impinge or collapse into the other, disallowing contact. Such focalisers offer multiple points of view distracting the viewer from the subjects at hand-North and the boy. For instance, the upright easel in the

shape of a tripod acts as a focaliser, directing the viewer's gaze towards the garden in the distance, away from the artist's interaction with the boy. Therefore such spaces compel the viewer to confer his/her gaze to those well-marked spaces, interrupting his/her immersion in the larger narrative of colonial representation which the image reveals. This results in an incoherence of the composition, producing an effect of fragmentation in the photograph.

The viewer is therefore made uncomfortable due to the lack of a center in the photograph, leaving the viewer uncertain as to where he should direct his gaze. He is made to constantly guide his eyes towards multiple points of view--North, the boy, the geometrical spaces such as the window-- and such spatial arrangements are disconcerting, making him aware of the process of looking at the photograph. The fact that half the pictorial surface is taken up by physical features of the house, where the two figures recede into the distance, leaves the viewer disengaged and unable to access fully the act of representation of a colonial other. The look is hard to sustain without any specific figure or object upon which to rest his gaze. It defies the viewer's expectations of seeing the stereotypical native body in a tropicalised and picturesque landscape.

As such, this photograph contests the viewer's role as the sole beholder of the gaze. This creates awareness at every stage of the politics of the act of looking, encouraging the viewer to retain a margin of critical distance from the photograph. Cameron places more emphasis on the act of representation rather than the representation itself. What the spectator is presented with is an awareness of his act of looking which is deferred at every point. Overall, a sense of fracture and ambiguity dominates this photograph.

Such complexity that haunts and disturbs the surface of this image needs to be understood in relation to Cameron's own role in the formation of colonial subjectivity in Ceylon. While North, the Ceylonese model and the viewer struggle back and forth against the visual field of the photograph, it is critical also to ascertain Cameron's position as the photographer, to comprehend the complexity of spectatorial interaction in this photograph. Does this print assign Cameron a different subjectivity and problematize her own racial/gender self consciousness in the colonies when she stages a moment when a Victorian woman artist captures the likeness of a young male adolescent?

In fact, this photograph connects to a history of the act of representation of representation. Michael Fried in his discussion of Gustave Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*, links Courbet's work with that of Velazquez's *Las Meninas* and Vermeer's *Artist in his Studio* as three ultimate representations of representation. Fried argues that while Courbet's painting could be read as an accurate self portrait of Courbet, it is also possible to see it as "something other than a photographically accurate depiction of himself at work on a painting" (160). He demonstrates that Courbet's self portraits depict the "dissolution of the boundary between the worlds of paintings and painter-beholder" (160).[11] Fried concludes that Courbet's self portraits "do more than simply modify the relationship of mutual facing between sitter and beholder" (68) but that they establish an

[11] The term, "painter-beholder" suggests Courbet's role as both painter and observer, and his desire to erase the barrier between himself and the scenes he creates. Courbet's desire to enter into the painting is reflected when the lower portion of the bodies of the figures in his painting thrusts towards the viewer, than the head, signifying the "the seeming physical proximity, of the painted image to the surface of the painting and, beyond that surface, to the beholder" (58). Fried notes how such an extension of the body towards the viewer, calls into question "the impermeability of the bottom framing edge to contain the representation, to bring it to a stop, to establish it at a fixed distance from both picture surface and beholder" (59).

"altogether different relationship between sitter and beholder, one in which the two are made congruent with one another" (68).[12]

I would like to propose that Cameron's photograph too suggests a form of displaced self representation, a desire to place Cameron's self within her work, which echoes Courbet's desire to merge with his paintings.[13] While it can be read as an attempt to make herself invisible, Cameron's representation of North as a woman artist also indicates an oblique form of self portraiture. It is possible to read North who is painting the native as a surrogate of Cameron.[14] Cameron is also a focalizer, complicating the visual matrix of the photograph. However, her photograph is hardly a simplistic self representation. In fact, self representation is a contested issue when Cameron's identification with North as the artist is highly ambiguous. First, Cameron subjects both the Ceylonese boy and North to the colonial gaze, deliberately destabilising the notion of the other as the sole object of the gaze. It is unclear to what extent she identifies with either a colonial or native perspective. It is uncertain whom Cameron identifies with in the photograph, dramatizing her struggle as the photographer.

Second, one wonders why Cameron chooses North, a botanical painter who mostly did atmospheric paintings, as the representative of herself. The answer could lie in the fact that both Cameron and North are not only artists, but they also challenge

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[12] See James Elkins for a further discussion on Fried's the "painter-beholder" in "The End of theory of the Gaze" in <http://www.jameselkins.com/html/upcoming.html>

[13] See Linda Nochlin's argument in *The Imaginary Orient* that although western man is absent from orientalist representations, he is implicitly present because "his is necessarily the controlling gaze, the gaze which brings the Oriental world into being, the gaze for which it is ultimately intended"(37).

[14] This is reminiscent of Ali Behdad's discussion of Nerval's account of his journey to Constantinople. Behdad argues that Nerval's journey is not a "representation but a figuration." Behdad continues, "instead of framing what is seen by the subject, the narrative incorporates him into the profile of the very picture it

gendered prescriptions of Victorian society by being transgressive, evading the oppressive confines of Victorian domesticity and pursuing identities as professional women. So the fact that Cameron captures another Victorian woman artist who aspired to travel through indigenous lands as a professional woman at work is understandable. Yet the mediums of representation of North and Cameron are quite different. While it is generally perceived that a painting is a subjective representation whereas a photograph is a "mechanical" reproduction of an external reality, my reading of Cameron's image obscures that definition by questioning the supposed objectivity of a photographic representation of the other. The boy's presence in the composition can be read as almost contrived. His tranquil, still posture is at odds with the contorted positioning of the body. Although his torso is turned towards Cameron, his strained posture with the pot awkwardly jutting towards his face hints at an uncomfortable relationship with the staging of the photograph. Thus drawing attention to the focalizers fails to naturalize the image, thereby hinting at the constructedness of the photograph.

Such an imaginative self representation problematizes notions of the self already complicated by Cameron. It is critical at this point to note Cameron's status in the colonies as ambivalent as she herself is an outsider to Victorian society. As a woman born and bred in India, she occupies a dubious position in the colonies in terms of race, especially considering the status of Anglo Indians in Victorian society. Hence she too, though an imperial agent, is an object of the western gaze, surveilled within the colonial setup of Ceylon. Furthermore, although her superior position to her photographic subject assigns her an imperial gaze, and her profession as a photographer grants her access to

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makes, thus eradicating the distant relation of observer and observed object" (24). This lack of "distinct boundary between an observing subject and an observed Other" can be discerned in Cameron's image.

the colonized through her lens, she is seen as a threatening force, being a woman as well as a woman with colonial affiliations, an issue I will explore in detail in my first chapter. Such surveillance perhaps explains Cameron's choice to pose an adolescent boy instead of a grown male in her photograph, which diffuses any erotic tension between the photographer and her model, betraying Cameron's own vulnerable role in the colonies.

It is also intriguing that while North the artist is clearly rendered in the image, the viewer cannot see what is pictured on the easel. The unfinished picture, which is placed on the upright easel, gives no indication as to what it holds. What is striking then is that North's representation does not present itself to the viewer in order to be seen. In the tradition of representations of representation, the canvas is usually visible as in the paintings of Courbet pointed out by Fried. Yet Cameron departs from such convention when North's painting remains hidden, inaccessible to the viewer. It is also doubtful whether she is indeed representing the native figure. Thus by making unavailable the emerging artifact of representation, Cameron mystifies rather than clarifies the entire representation. Such concealing thwarts any definitive reading of the painting by North.

The photograph's simultaneous affirmation and contestation of Orientalist discourses through the construction of both North and the Ceylonese as spectacle by Cameron reveals that any essentialist account of either the relationship between the British and the Ceylonese or the colonial gaze cannot serve as useful in this photograph. The monolithic constructions of the colonizer and colonized erected by imperial discourses are put to question. Multiple and contradictory roles and viewing positions circulate, questioning the objectifying nature of colonial photography. The various responses and readings which the photograph proposes begin to undermine a singular

interpretation of the text.

Varied subject positions --North, the Ceylonese, the photographer and beholder-- introduce disjunction into the surface of the photograph, and dismantle uniform notions of looking. The web of visual exchange constructs a struggle between the artist, the model, the photographer and the viewer, contradicting a singular notion of the gaze. Uncertain about who is looking at whom, the crisscrossing of gazes in this photograph constructs all four participants as viewing subjects. The competing networks of looking and power relationships open up alternative spaces to generate discussions of the ambivalent colonial gaze, spaces at the intersection of race, gender and visuality. Cameron's deliberate move to enact North's problematic act of representation within the photograph, one which is still in process and hence incomplete, and her own desire to picture that act and stage the limits through her own photography in the colonies denies closure to the photograph. Cameron enacts the representation of the colonized in order to perform its very limitations.

Revisiting the Colonial Representations of Ceylon

Using Mieke Bal's theoretical paradigm, I have drawn attention to the multitude of possible positions the viewers can adopt in interpreting the visual text by showing how the viewers are incorporated into a web of focalization. I have suggested that the photograph does not offer a single, unified perspective from a centralized position of enunciation to theorize the relationship between the colonial artist and her native subject. The intersection of multiple and often contradictory frames undermines a singular perspective of the image. My analysis of Cameron's photograph foregrounds my

approach to other visual and literary constructions of Ceylon, to analyze what is at stake in the reading of colonial productions of Ceylon as complicating a colonial binary. While Cameron's photograph demonstrates the need for differential readings to disrupt the stereotypical conceptions which erase the complexity in the Ceylonese body of photographs, reading as a strategy for analysis provides me a way to reveal alternative sights/sites of Ceylon in the interstices where the colonial artist/writer and his/her native subjects converge, spaces subject to myriad encounters, exchanges and negotiations. As multiple gazes intersect in these spaces, fracturing clear-cut colonial gazes and generating new ways of seeing, what I focus on are the ruptures in representation. The central question guiding my analyses of British representations of Ceylon is the following: How do we re-conceive the representations of the other by analyzing the fractured spaces in British constructions of Ceylon?

The reading of the intersection of multiple frames in Cameron's image helps me to reveal alternative insights into the relationship between vision and gender, vision and race, and vision and landscape in representations of the colonized. First I investigate the interconnection between gender and vision in British representations. I explore whether the interaction between the viewers and colonial representations of Ceylon is a stereotypical replay of colonial men and women penetrating a feminized space. For instance, what kinds of complications open up when Julia Margaret Cameron, a female photographer, represents a colonized male? In fact, the gender dynamics of the above discussed photograph are intriguing. The boy is an interesting contrast to the conventional colonial photographs of the Ceylonese male who poses rarely with a vessel.

Indeed, there are a number of images of Ceylonese women who pose with pitchers.[15] As I will explore in the dissertation, Cameron's choice to model the young male in an aesthetic position is perhaps related to the gender ambiguous discourses constructed in Ceylon, where the Sinhalese male who is usually depicted as hard to discern in terms of gender, neither male nor female, is eroticized, creating a charged atmosphere between the male models and Victorian women artists. Therefore what is the result when a female photographer visualizes an eroticized colonized male?

Likewise, what happens when a male traveler confronts a gender ambiguous Sinhalese male in Ceylon? How does gender ambiguity relate to the colonial sexual politics in Ceylon? I analyze how such constructions reveal potential homoerotic sights in Ceylon, complicating a stereotypical heterosexual male gaze the viewers can adopt. Further, I examine how the ambiguous space of blurred gendered boundaries reveals a frontier in which colonial women can construct identities without adhering to the binary oppositions of gender in Victorian and colonial culture. As Cameron's image demonstrates, the relationship between the Ceylonese male, the Victorian women artists and photographers, and viewers provides spaces to explore the gender and sexual dynamics of Ceylon. However, my analysis between vision and gender in Ceylon does not obscure the relationship between the female artists and the female subjects. How is colonial representation complicated through a reading of the interaction between a female photographer and her women models in Ceylon? I claim that such gendered visions offer glimpses into ambivalent gazes which operate in the Ceylonese context, frustrating orientalist readings of colonial viewing practices in Ceylon.

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[15] See C. Scowen's photograph of an adolescent female posing with a vessel in Regeneration: a Reappraisal of Photography in Ceylon, 1850-1900, by John Falconer in collaboration with Ismeth Raheem.

Next, I explore the relationship between vision and race in Ceylonese representations, and to what extent a reading of these representations complicates the British colonizers' constructions of the Ceylonese. Photography in the late nineteenth century, as a technology of production and representation of the colonized, created and spread racialised images of the Ceylonese, in order to naturalize the unequal distribution of wealth and power during the era. Yet, how does Cameron's photograph reveal moments of subversion of this power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized? Does it enact a simplistic binary between the colonizer and the colonized in Ceylon? As Cameron's photograph shows, Cameron's ambivalent racial position in Ceylon produces a situation where she cannot place herself in a fixed location as an artist in order to visualize a native. The result is the potential for the re-evaluation of colonial categories in Ceylonese representations in the face of such intricacy, a welcome departure from a dominant aesthetic inherited from a colonialist discourse which perceives colonial productions as asserting a binary relationship, an issue raised in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979).

As such, I wish to foreground to what extent vision is theorized from a colonial (male heterosexual) point of view, and to contest such a notion through a reading of visual practices from positions outside of these locations. I examine whether a reading of complexity of colonial interaction in Ceylonese representations provides an intricate account of how colonial gazes can be theorized as multiple and contradictory. I claim that by reading the ambiguous and fluctuating relationship between the British and the Ceylonese in colonial productions of Ceylon, manifold gazes open up, which undercuts theories which have visualized colonial and anti colonial gazes as uniform, one

directional and oppositional.[16] While I am not forwarding a new definition of the colonial gaze, I propose a reading which takes into consideration the multiple viewing positions which can be discerned in colonial productions of Ceylon.

Third, I analyze the relationship between vision and landscape. The creation of Ceylon in colonial literary and visual narratives almost always happens within the framework of the picturesque. One way in which Ceylon was reinvented as an attractive site to suit the new economic climate burgeoning in Ceylon was to reinforce an idea of the island's picturesqueness, perhaps in the hope of securing further British investment in the colony.[17] Krista A. Thompson, in her discussion of the picturesque construction of the Caribbean, notes that "[t]ravel industry supporters have long sold locales as picturesque, and tourists have clamored to represent these places at least since the popularity of British travel to Italy on the Grand Tour...and the picturesque tours of the British countryside inspired by William Gilpin in the eighteenth century"(10). Likewise Ceylon too is constructed as such a locale, visually imagined and represented as a picturesque garden despite its diversity. For instance, in the late nineteenth century, the pictorial focus of most of the photographs, illustrations, postcards, paintings, sketches and English travel narratives of Ceylon is the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, with its array of exotic botanical specimens. Its talipot palm tree is one of the celebrated images. It is one of the highlights of the visual repertoire of Ceylon in the nineteenth century among other physical attractions such as exotic flora and fauna.

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[16] Although investigations of the gaze are generally seen as outdated, James Elkins argues that it is a "deceptive situation...because there is still neither consensus about the gaze nor a better theory in sight" (1).

[17] Krista A. Thompson discusses the construction of the Caribbean in the late nineteenth century, and how the tourism promoters advertised the landscape as picturesque.

Ceylon is therefore constructed as a pleasurable site by the British, indicated by some of the titles of the travel narratives such as *Two Happy Years in Ceylon* by Constance Gordon Cumming, *Notes of a Tour in India and Ceylon during the Winter of 1888-89* by Helen C. Ford and *Excursions, Adventures, and Field-sports in Ceylon* by Col. James Campbell. The titles are also indicative of the picturesque construction of Ceylon, such as *Souvenirs of Ceylon* by A.M. Ferguson, and *Picturesque Ceylon* by Henry Cave. In fact Helen C. Ford's text not only tells of a picturesque tour of Ceylon, but goes to the extent of inserting plant clippings into the pages of her text, combined with her own drawings.[18] It is hardly surprising then that the picturesque ideal is applied to even the promotion of the plantation economy: lucrative tea estates are packaged as exotic tea "gardens" by the British.[19]

Not only is Ceylon reduced to an image of a scenic landscape, but it is also produced as a series of selective visual images. Visual forms were central to the imagining of empire.[20] Likewise the colonial possession of Ceylon too was visualized through images. Even most of the travel narratives assume the status of picturesque albums and construct Ceylon as a string of visuals. Constance Gordon Cumming's text, for example, is mostly interspersed with paintings of Ceylon, while the narrative itself draws attention to the photographic spaces of the colony. Even texts that depart from the conventional travel narrative incorporate stock picturesque visuals. Fanny Penny's

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[18] See Krista Thompson's comment that such gestures "provide visual evidence of having been there and having 'taken,' by physical removal or through the camera's shutter, the island's natural forms"(28).

[19] For a discussion of the politics of advertising tea, see Anandi Ramamurthy's chapter titled "Tea Advertising and its Ideological Support for Vertical Control over Production" in her text titled Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising.

[20] For an elaboration, see Anne Maxwell.

Fickle Fortune in Ceylon is a text which does not evade the issues of economics of empire. It outlines the hardships of a planter's wife. But images of picturesque coconut trees and bullock carts which seem disconnected from a plantation life are nevertheless incorporated into her text by the publisher.

But as Cameron's photograph demonstrates, the picturesque can be incorporated into a representation as a tenuous element, not necessarily acting as the dominant frame in which the colonial interaction is staged. By blurring the landscape beyond, and foregrounding the native model within Ceylon, Cameron privileges the figure over ground, reframing the representation of Ceylon. Therefore, by unraveling the premise which connects Ceylon with a picturesque ideology, I reveal how a picturesque vision is destabilized in Ceylon. I unpack the picturesque by resisting the dominant focalization--Ceylon being focalized as picturesque—and explore if the relationship between vision and the picturesque signifies contradictions. I examine whether the picturesque aesthetic can be read as a conflicted response to Ceylon, at times ineffectively superimposed on the Ceylonese landscape, unable to construct Ceylon as a fixed and benign space.

I emphasize Ceylonese representations because many analyses of representations of Ceylon eschew a critical study of convoluted forms of power, sexuality and identity formation in these texts. Colonial constructions of Ceylon are still read by many critics as unmediated and unproblematic English responses to the crown colony.[21] A case in point is recent Sri Lankan reproductions of colonial photography.[22] While these texts

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[21] Ceylon became a crown colony under the British in 1802 and was the first British crown colony to receive independence in 1948. For more on the crown colony system of government in Ceylon, see Lennox A. Mills.

[22] See Ismeth Raheem and Percy Colin Thome for a selection of nineteenth-century photographs, included

accomplish their task of illuminating images of a previous era which act as testimony to an imperial past, they fail to investigate the complexities of the discourses of colonial power in the production of the prints. The images are often celebrated as nostalgic remembrances of a previous time, historical sights that evoke a particular sociopolitical and cultural context. But they are still confined to a reading which undermines the role of racial, gender and power difference in the construction of such photographs.

When the images are recognized as productions based on claims of western superiority, they are still read through a paradigm of oppositionality. That is, these representations are seen as theorizing a colonial relationship which posits a simplistic binary between the Ceylonese and the British.[23] For instance, Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs have been seen by many critics as colonial depictions of the colonized, reinforcing a division between the English photographer and her native subjects.[24] However, such readings overlook a wider range of cultural discourses, which form conflicting narratives of Ceylon. They inevitably exclude considerations of socio-cultural factors like gender, class, race, whose significance in the formation of the representations is yet to be adequately explored.

A central concern in my dissertation is to distance myself from these approaches,

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as evidence of a rich tradition of colonial photography in Ceylon.

[23] Homi Bhabha has already challenged Edward Said, arguing that oppositionality is not an adequate framework through which one can view colonial constructions, discussing how resistance to colonial forms of power develops within the interstices of the colonial structure itself. Bhabha contests Said's insistence on the monolithic character of orientalism. He notes "there is always, in Said, the suggestion that colonial power and discourse are possessed entirely by the colonizer, which is an historical and theoretical simplification"("The Other Question," 158). However a critical analysis of the representations of Ceylon is necessary in order to unsettle oppositional ideology still in place in the consideration of Ceylon.

[24] While early English critics such as Helmut Gernsheim depict the Sri Lankan photographs as simple portrayals of natives, more recent analyses by critics such as Joanne Lukitsch suggest complications, though still reinforcing oppositionality.

and investigate positions of visualising a colonial relationship outside of these binaries. As Cameron's print shows, the viewer cannot position himself according to a binary as he must continuously zigzag across the photograph, at odds with a singular view point. While I am aware of my own problematic participation in this postcolonial/cultural studies discourse which risks ignoring the colonial economic and social realities that sustained oppressive hierarchies in Ceylon, I wish to establish that my investigation of moments of incoherence and fracture in the colonial representations of Ceylon disrupts clear-cut binaries, inviting a critical rethinking of the power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

I also wish to draw attention to the fact that Ceylon occupies a somewhat peculiar geographical space. Critics such as Ismeth Raheem and Percy Colin Thome have noted that Ceylon was a point of transition for many travelers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mainly a site for transit from one destination to another, usually from the center to the periphery. While Ceylon's geographical location played a vital role in the Indian Ocean in the nineteenth century, passengers traveling between Europe and Asia had to pass through the ports of Ceylon before continuing their journey. Bella Woolf in one of her travel accounts makes reference to the fact that there are no tourists but only passengers in Ceylon. Constructing a division between the tourist and the passenger, Woolf suggests that Ceylon is not a site of amusement for the tourist gaze but one of transfer for the traveler. Accordingly the travelers see Ceylon during transit, catching random sights/sites.[25] Ceylon can then be read as a peculiarly liminal space or

[25] Paul Fussell equates the role of traveler with the masculine and that of the tourist with the feminine. While the traveler is the active seeker, the tourist is passive. Fussell in fact points out three types of figures, the explorer, the traveler and the tourist, and notes that "if the explorer moves toward the risks of the formless and the unknown, the tourist moves towards the security of pure cliché"(39). Interestingly Fussell

an in-between space, a space which exists as an unstable site, a site which I claim allows an ambivalent relationship between the British and the Ceylonese to emerge.

The time period underlying my analyses is from mid-nineteenth century till the early twentieth century (1850-1910) and a majority of the texts I focus on is concentrated in the late nineteenth century. Under British rule (1796-1948) Ceylon became one of the principal plantation colonies of the British Empire, with the introduction of coffee, tea, coconut and rubber besides cinnamon which had already been introduced by the Portuguese. Post 1850 brought in a new period in economic prosperity for Ceylon, the period from the fall of coffee to the rise of tea, which flourished in the late 1880's and 1890's. The expansion of plantation agriculture also ushered in modernization, in the form of a network of roads, a transportation system.[26] The significance of this period for my project is that it is an era in the colonial history of Ceylon when the island becomes increasingly visible and accessible, as I will discuss in my dissertation. One only needs to examine the substantial production of images of Ceylon during this period in the form of photographs, studio portraits, postcards, paintings, etc. While Ceylon's increasing visuality is related to its contribution to the British imperial capitalist enterprise, and visualizing Ceylon itself is predicated on an unequal relationship of power in a colonial context, such a dynamic provides me with the opportunity to explore the tensions and contradictions at issue in the relationship between power and vision in Ceylon.

In contemporary scholarship of colonial constructions of Ceylon, there is a lack of

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adds that "it is between these two poles that the traveler mediates, retaining all he can of the excitement of the unpredictable attaching to exploration, and fusing that with the pleasure of 'knowing where one is' belonging to tourism"(39). Hence the traveler is assigned an in-between position between the known and the unknown.

[26] For more, see K.M. De Silva.

sufficient critical discourse on visuality as an index of economic and political power in Ceylon.[27] In fact current scholarship neglect visual representations of Ceylon, interpreting them as either deliberately effacing the economic and political realities of colonialism, or perceiving them as pleasurable spectacles which are disconnected from such concerns. Even scholarship on colonial texts such as travel narratives has casually bypassed visual representations such as paintings, sketches and photographs as subsidiary devices in the text, intended for illustrative purposes. While such evaluations have privileged narratives over vision, I wish to argue that visual representations can be read as more complex, texts in their own right which reveal their own political and economic discourse. As my reading of Cameron's photograph demonstrates, the print is hardly incidental to the construction of Ceylon. Discarding tired and benign stereotypes of Ceylon, Cameron's image can be read as one which blocks "picturesque" perceptions by recasting Ceylon as a space which manipulates the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, challenging the specular economy of the gaze. As such, visual productions of Ceylon can be read as dynamic sites of gendered and racial interaction, sites which cannot be unproblematically situated within a picturesque colonial discourse.

In the following pages, I investigate the significance of visual constructions of Ceylon. Recognizing that colonial conflicts and contradictions were expressed and negotiated through visual imagery, I argue that visual representations of Ceylon are a contentious site, providing me a way to theorize differential gazes as differential articulations of power, which intersect and interact in Ceylon. Such theorizing enables me to establish the complexity of the gazes which operate in Ceylon. However, my

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[27] There have been numerous studies on the representational practices of Ceylon by the British. See Neloufer de Mel, Falconer and Ismeth Raheem, R.K. De Silva, Raheem and Thome, etc. For a discussion

analysis is not confined to visual representations. While focusing on literary texts provides me with an inter-textual approach to the production of Ceylon across genres, moving away from the word-image opposition, it also allows me to examine how the visual and the literary intersect, producing multiple, heterogeneous and contested sights of Ceylon. For instance, travel narratives such as Mrs. Arthur Thompson's *A Peep into Ceylon: A Book of Travel Written for Children* demonstrate how the visual and the literary operate in a similar fashion, where the anxieties and contradictions which the narrator confronts as a woman traveler in Ceylon are revealed in the illustration which frames her text. However, in texts such as Carolyn Corner's *Ceylon: The Paradise of Adam*, the visual and the literary clash, creating manifold tensions in the text. Corner's attempts to dismantle the picturesque productions of Ceylon are at odds with the photographic illustrations which mark her text at various points of the narrative, stock images inserted by the publisher which have no bearing on the complexity of the narrative.

Drawing from interdisciplinary perspectives of postcolonial, feminist, Victorian and visual studies, I focus on diverse genres of representation: colonial photography and images, travel narratives and fiction. The material ranges from nineteenth-century archival texts such as British travel narratives, colonial hunting manuals, travel guides, conduct books, letters and journals, ethnographic and picturesque photographs and paintings, Victorian photographic portraits, scientific drawing and newspaper engravings, colonial historiography, to contemporary writings on Sri Lanka. Through this miscellaneous assemblage of texts, I refrain from articulating a uniform statement about the construction of Ceylon which I believe is counter productive. Instead I reveal various

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of representations of Ceylon by the Americans, see Ian Goonetilleke.

sights in which multiple perspectives on Ceylon can be discerned. Just as Cameron's photograph proposes a variety of positions for the viewer to gauge the interaction between the colonial artist and the model, the multiplicity of texts and genres provides me an opportunity to reveal a plurality of sights/sites, producing Ceylon as heterogeneous. It is these contestatory and contradictory sites which question essentialist constructions of the isle. As such, I approach these competing spaces in colonial representation through various critical lenses, as one particular methodology cannot explain the range of interactions which surface in these colonial constructions.

My first chapter reexamines Julia Margaret Cameron's Ceylonese photographs, in order to explore ways in which Cameron's photographic representations of local women, especially the female coolies, critique, re-script or re-appropriate colonial and Orientalist narratives of Ceylon.[28] This chapter argues that the photographs frustrate the observer's expectations of typical ethnographic images by being subversive, interrogating the notion of the native woman's body as a site of inscription for colonial desires. I begin by investigating to what extent current discussions of Cameron's Ceylonese prints by critics such as Helmut Gernsheim, Joanne Lukitsch, Victoria Olsen, and Sylvia Wolf contribute to the Orientalist project by positing a unidirectional hegemonic colonial gaze, disregarding the ambivalence that unsettles comfortable binaries of the colonizer and the colonized in her photographs. Next, I provide a brief overview of colonial photography in the British Empire as well as in Ceylon during the late nineteenth century in order to construe the dominant colonial perceptions produced for and embraced by a western audience. Consequently, I juxtapose Cameron's prints against the work of other colonial

[28] Coolies were indentured laborers brought from South India during British rule to work the coffee and tea plantations that were booming in the nineteenth century in Ceylon.

photographers such as W.L.H. Skeen, Charles T. Scowen, and A.W.A. Plate in order to differentiate Cameron's photographic practices in Ceylon. In this instance, an analysis of a typical erotic photograph of a local woman by a colonial photographer allows me to reveal the violence perpetrated against colonized women by imperial discourses.

I also analyze one of Cameron's English photographs to discern how her Ceylonese work departs from her Victorian photographs, to counter the accusations leveled at her Ceylonese work as different from the English prints and therefore inferior. Taking into account current debates on the gaze by critics such as Mieke Bal and Slavoj Zizek in particular, I analyze how Cameron's photographs contest a stereotypical colonial gaze although they share certain features with ethnographic images on the surface. As an interpretive instrument, focalization put forward by Bal is well suited to unveil the subtle and ambivalent web of gazes that traverse the images of Cameron. I examine the distribution of focalisers in these images and reveal the communicative act which takes place within these prints. James Elkins notes that "multiple eyes have always posed interpretive problems"(25). While Elkins ponders the "significance of accumulated stares," I investigate the significance of a collection of focal points in these images, and how multiple viewing positions produce a series of meanings which unsettle the prints. I conclude by discussing the multiple and at times contradictory positions negotiated by Cameron in Ceylon, where the colonizer ceases to be monolithic, determined by race, gender, and class.

Chapter two explores the representation of Sinhalese men in both visual and literary representations of Ceylon. I focus on the issue of the perceived ambiguity of Sinhalese men in the nineteenth-century representations, especially travel writing on

Ceylon. The Sinhalese women are hardy distinguishable as the female sex of Ceylon while the Sinhalese men are misrecognized by the English in many instances as the colonized female. While many critics such as Elizabeth Harris and Robert Aldrich have identified these depictions of ambivalence of gender in Ceylon, they have failed to explore questions of gender and power in relation to such cross-cultural constructions. While I myself recognize that such constructions are exotic, I argue that such a paradigm can be read as far more complex, when such ambiguity becomes central to the frustrations of the colonial male travelers. Such a reading is encouraged by the revulsion of such gender indeterminacy expressed by the travelers. I argue that revulsion carries traces of homoerotic undertones which I intend to unveil through a close reading of these texts. More importantly, I show how colonial women draw upon discourses of gender ambiguity to access Sinhalese men, rewriting their relationship with the colonized male.

I initiate my discussion with a close analysis of Samuel Baker's observations on gender ambiguity in order to illustrate how Ceylon emerges as a space of disruption for the English. Next, I argue that because of such gender indeterminacy, it is possible to discern homoerotic tensions between English and Sinhalese men which are ignored in current scholarship. I examine the travelogues of Edward Sullivan, Edward Carpenter and Ernst Haekel in order to unravel the particular anxieties which erupt in relation to such issues of ambiguity. Next I examine to what extent the Victorian women travelers and artists can access a counter-hegemonic gaze by accessing the Sinhalese male. I first explore Mrs. Arthur Thompson's travel narrative in order to analyze the precise complications involved when Sinhalese men and colonial women interact. Next I focus on two visual images, an illustration by an anonymous artist which is inserted into

Thompson's narrative and a photograph by Julia Margaret Cameron. I argue that while the illustration attempts to force Thompson's text into a particular stereotypical gender framework, Cameron's photograph dismantles gender boundaries by staging an image which problematises a conflictual relationship between the English photographer and her native male models.

In the third chapter, I investigate the production of Ceylon as a picturesque site, operating within contemporary discourses of Orientalism. Nineteenth-century visual and literary constructions of the colony have been often accommodated through a picturesque framework, reducing Ceylon to an aesthetic tableau. Such perceptions have been cemented by images of tropical climes and gardens with lush foliage, exotic inhabitants adding to its pictorial elegance. The picturesque aesthetic has positioned Ceylon as a pleasurable and domesticated space, set against the background of colonial efforts of reinforcing political and economic control over the isle. I revisit the picturesque and examine whether there is anything disruptive about the location –Ceylon- which has made white representational practices in the period anxiously resort to such an aesthetic practice. Recognizing the ideological functions behind the use of the picturesque as an aesthetic category in the construction of Ceylon, I examine the various ways in which the picturesque is incorporated by various texts in order to facilitate as well as unsettle the appropriation of Ceylon. I argue that discourses of the picturesque in Ceylon are problematised when the picturesque simultaneously conceals but also reveals the socio-cultural and racial conflicts in the production of Ceylon as an aesthetic category. I argue that the picturesque is fractured by a series of competing gazes which operate in Ceylon.

I begin by examining why and how Victorian travelers such as William Knighton

adopt the picturesque as a mode of accessing Ceylon, and explore what kinds of anxieties and instabilities already present in Victorian notions of self are brought to the surface through such incorporations. Relying on the work of theorists such as William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, Catherine Belsey, Clyde Taylor and others, I analyze the politics of the picturesque in order to reveal how the picturesque is a means to suppress the power play behind seemingly innocent constructions of the isle. James Tennent's travel narrative provides me one such example. Next, I analyze a pictorial travelogue by Constance Gordon Cumming to discern the conflation between the picturesque and gender, and how female travelers/ artists utilize the picturesque in differential ways in order to negotiate their own identities in Ceylon. Afterwards I initiate my discussion of the disruptions of the picturesque through a close analysis of Marianne North's paintings which I argue are complex manipulations of the picturesque aesthetic which act as a contrast to the work of Cummings. I wrap up the chapter by focusing on a short story which elucidates the subtle and ominous ways through which the picturesque contains a violence which threatens to erupt in the narrative, challenging the Edenic discourses of Ceylon.

My final chapter acts as an epilogue, only tangentially related to the colonial construction of Ceylon. I suggest that it almost acts as a sequel, moving away from the British representations to under-theorized local responses and productions of Ceylon. In this chapter, I do not seek representations of anti-colonial resistance. What I wish to do is to question critical practices which have kept local representations by the Ceylonese at a distance, away from English representations, reinforcing a colonial binary. In my attempt to disrupt such problematic hierarchies where there is a colonial divide between the English and the Ceylonese, this chapter examines to what extent local narratives are a

part of imperial narratives. I ask: Are the Ceylonese participants in the production of "Ceylon" when they act as co-authors of colonial fictions? Yet I also ask: how might we view productions of Ceylon by the Ceylonese which complement colonial representations, and yet stand in tension with those imperial visualizations?

Therefore, while the first three chapters provide a different framework with which to hold the conflicting and contradictory perspectives within white representational practices, I examine local productions to uncover multiple determinations which complicate oppositional perspectives, interrogating interpretations which reduce local productions to an oversimplified rhetoric of resistance to colonial productions. Representations by the Ceylonese reveal mixed messages when they contend with Orientalist discourses of Ceylon in an ambivalent manner. For instance, one of the central texts I use is a local rendering of a Shakespearean play staged in Ceylon in the late nineteenth century addressed to a colonial/Anglicized audience. Drawing upon theorists such as Homi Bhabha, I argue that while this play is a "bad copy", the varying effects of the play on the audience highlight the conflicting nature of these constructions, and the instability of the production. Therefore I claim that local representations of Ceylon are a contested site for the reproduction of binary relationships of colonial power.

My discussion begins with an analysis of a reaction to a Pear's soap advertisement by a group of peasants, which allows me to demonstrate the complexity of production and reception of colonial images in Ceylon. Next, I analyze a Ceylonese newspaper, *Muniandi*, to show how a text in English, which might be interpreted as one partial to a western discourse, might also be taken to launch both an explicit as well as implicit attack on colonial governance in Ceylon. To this end, I examine several visual

images which are included in *Muniandi* to illustrate how these struggles are enacted. In the process, I explore how such a critique is undermined by the network of colonial power relations which influence not just the colonial agents but also the colonial subjects. I finally conclude with an in-depth analysis of *As You Like it*. *As You Like it* opens up a performative space in Ceylon through which the Ceylonese are able to infiltrate, rewrite and transform the colonial text. However, I question to what extent those appropriations can be perceived as subversive, when they are constrained by multiple discourses.

I conclude my dissertation by briefly exploring if conflicting tropical constructions of Ceylon carry forward still into current discussions of Sri Lanka, and if the contradictions and disruptions which my reading has helped surface in these colonial constructions are still being effaced for other social and political ends. Ali Behdad argues:

> postcolonial archival work...ought to restore to the science of colonialism its political significance in the current global setting. What would emerge out of such a reading is not a specialized erudite knowledge of Europe's guilty past but the provoking discovery of new traces of the past today, a recognition that transforms belatedness into a politics of contemporaneity. (9) [29]

He notes that without such historical consciousness of the "link between past phenomena and present events", "the postcolonial reading of the colonial encounter is at best an informative ethnographic representation of colonial violence, and at worst, a displaced interpretation of archival materials"(9). Therefore, I return to the current era to examine

[29] Ali Behdad notes that "Orientalism as a western discourse on the Other continues to operate so powerfully only makes the need for counterrepresentational practices more urgent"(viii).

if Edenic sights are still inscribed vigorously in representations of Ceylon in both British as well as local narratives. One needs to only look at various current travel brochures on Sri Lanka where the island emerges as a site of tea plantations and spice gardens, picturesque sights superimposed on a landscape which is being increasingly characterized by ethnic violence.[30] Julian West's *Serpent in Paradise* allows me to explore this phenomenon well, to investigate to what extent nostalgic musings are reactivated in the 21st century, and to what extent the tendency toward the homogenization of the past conceals political and economic agendas in an increasingly capitalist society.

Hence, my dissertation seeks to contribute to the ongoing analyses of tensions and contradictions of colonial representations. I focus on Ceylon to emphasize that the dominant literary and visual archive of Ceylon only registers but an echo of the complexity and variety of colonial productions of the isle. My project intends to intervene in the reconfiguration of cross-cultural representations of the other by emphasizing the need for an alternative imperial archive of Ceylon which is varied and disparate, which reveals sights/sites in Ceylon which are less easy to categorize through an essentialist optic. I intend to highlight how such an archive calls attention to fractured forms of looking and generates new ways of seeing, reinterpreting the network of power relationships at work in nineteenth-century Ceylon. The political relevance of reading as a practice which I deploy to unearth such an archive lies in disclosing my own positionality as a reader, and acknowledging that my own project is a re-presentation,

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[30] The ethnic war between the government military and Tamil rebels has continued from 1983 onwards to present, and is concentrated largely in the northern parts of Sri Lanka.

writing and visualizing Ceylon to be read.[31]

[31] I borrow this idea from Gayatri Spivak when she argues, in relation to a teenage woman who committed suicide in 1926 in Calcutta, that she was "really trying to analyze and represent her text" (57). Spivak goes on to say: "She wasn't particularly trying to speak to me. I was representing her, I was reinscribing her. To an extent, I was writing her to be read"(57).

Chapter I

Out-of-Focus: Visualising the Female Body in Julia Margaret Cameron's Ceylonese Photographs

Introduction: Re-Reading Julia Margaret Cameron's Images of Ceylonese Women

Though Virginia Woolf, with Roger Fry, edits a collection of Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs, titled *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women*, published in 1926, it is not until 1948 that her photography becomes more widely known when Helmut Gernsheim devotes a book to her work called *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work.* Reclaimed as a pioneer photographer of the nineteenth century, her status as an eminent artist restored, Cameron's work has been subject to extensive study, her English portraits seen as a mark of genius. However, her Ceylonese prints remain largely ignored by contemporary and current criticism, considered as inferior and unworthy of serious scholarship. Despite the efforts of a few recent scholars who try to acknowledge the prints while according the work some complexity, issues of race, gender and class still remain insufficiently addressed. [32]

In fact, Cameron's relatively sparse production of Ceylonese portraits in Ceylon has led critics to label her as uninterested in the aesthetic potential of the Ceylonese body.[33] Her Ceylonese oeuvre has been read as a half hearted attempt to picture the

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[32] Critics such as Joanne Lukitch and Victoria Olsen are some of the scholars who have attempted to re-read Cameron's Sri Lankan photographs taking into account the aspects of gender and race in the colonies.

[33] Helmut Gernsheim has been quick to marginalize the Ceylonese work as "quite unimportant" (83), dismissing them as "pictures of natives", which "could equally well be the work of some other amateur" (83). Sylvia Wolf states, "today we can't help but notice that, for Cameron, this ideal world of Arthurian ladies and Shakespearean heroines was not populated by women of color" (15). Charting Cameron's move to Ceylon, Wolf adds that Cameron's flimsy photographic production in the colony was due to several reasons, a few being the harsh climate and the technical problems such an environment brings as well as the difficulty of securing chemical supplies. She observes that mostly "people of Sri Lanka did not have the same effect on her imagination as did the people-gentry and peasantry alike-of the isle of Wright" (15). She

"native", as well as her disinterest in circulating the prints. As Victoria Olsen comments, "it is always assumed that Cameron's portraits from Ceylon are all of native people and so the interpretation breaks down along race and national lines" (251). This comment is interesting not only in its attempt to juxtapose her English prints with the Ceylonese ones, and finding the latter wanting, but also in its assumption that Cameron's very different Ceylonese prints are a mark of failure.

But to assume that Cameron's agenda in the colonies is solely to reinforce the colonized as "other" is problematic. To limit oneself to such readings not only erases the complex relationship between colonialism and visual representation but also discounts the dynamics of race, gender, class and geopolitics in the production of images in a colonial setting, and the ambivalence of Cameron's position in the colonial hierarchy.[34] It is within this context that one must interpret Cameron's portraits of women with reference to the racial and sexual economies of looking at play in the colonies. Although they seem to conform to particular colonial stereotypes, and while on one level they do, they are also extremely complicated, complicating hegemonic ways of visualizing the colonized in Ceylon.

Taking as a point of departure the notion of the focaliser advanced by Mieke Bal, and Slavoj Zizek's elaboration of the Lacanian gaze where the subject viewing is already gazed at, I consider the Ceylonese photographs of Cameron as far more nuanced and layered than previous assessments have led us to believe. In this chapter, I offer a re-

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argues that "the dramas of [Cameron's] mind were performed by white actresses" (15). Amanda Hopkinson and Brian Hill have expressed similar sentiments.

[34] See Jonathan Crary for a discussion of the ideological and constructed nature of seeing. Crary notes: "vision ...is embedded in a pattern of adaptability to new technological relations, social configurations, and economic imperatives" (13).

examination of the Ceylonese photographs and I claim that Cameron's photographic representations of especially the Ceylonese women complicate romantic fictions which surround Victorian discourses of Ceylon.[35] I argue that while her Ceylon prints can be read as conventional ethnographic photographs, they could also be viewed as demonstrating how multiple gazes and subject positions intersect and interact, frustrating orientalist fantasies and complicating a voyeuristic gaze. I examine if an ambivalent colonial gaze operates in these photographs and if any simple theorizing of the colonized gaze as either resistant or oppositional is reductive in this instance, which will reveal the complexity of the colonial interaction in Ceylon.[36]

Therefore, I begin with an examination of a typical nineteenth-century ethnographic image of a Ceylonese woman in order to show exactly how Cameron departs from such conventions, and challenges colonial positions of mastery and domination, defying the construction and circulation of images of the exotic native.[37] Next I investigate one of her photographs of an English maidservant to illustrate how Ceylonese photographs depart from Victorian conventions, presenting a striking contrast with the English prints, which has led critics to consider the Ceylonese photographs as simplistic depictions of the Ceylonese where a stereotypical colonial gaze operates.[38]

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[35] This chapter goes back to my MA thesis at Michigan State University in 2003 in which I examined Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs of Sri Lankan women, arguing that Cameron opens up spaces of intimacy between the photographer and the native models. Some of the material in the MA thesis has been integrated into this chapter.

[36] The resistant gaze has been usually read as an oppositional, returned gaze. See Homi Bhabha's reference to the threatened return of the look and Bell Hooks's discussion of the gaze.

[37] Palinda De Silva dates this image to early 1900's, before 1905, as it is a platinum photograph. For more images of nineteenth century Ceylon, see De Silva's collection at <http://www.imagesofceylon.com>

[38] E. Ann Kaplan notes that looking is not an innocent but a culturally determined act which involves

Afterwards, I analyze four of Cameron's Ceylonese photographs in order to demonstrate how they enable a different reading. I argue that while they share features of the conventional ethnographic, and vary from the English images, they also dismantle the stereotypical conceptions of picturing the native. I contend that the ambivalence that haunts and disturbs the surface of these Ceylonese images of Cameron opens up sites of conflict within white representational practices in Ceylon. Hence, I wish to problematise the supposed absence of resistance and complexity in Cameron's Ceylonese corpus. I try to identify sites of rupture and disintegration in these images and how Cameron's position becomes more nuanced, especially the conditions under which she views the Ceylonese make her look against the grain, provoking alternative perspectives of seeing the native.

Capturing Ceylon: Colonial Photography in Late Nineteenth Century Ceylon

Before engaging in a closer reading of Cameron's Ceylonese photographs, it is worth noting how colonial photography functions as a mechanism of the colonial apparatus. As Eleanor Hight and Gary Sampson note, photographs "operate as complex discursive objects of colonial power and culture"(1), in the service of colonial

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power as Foucault points out. Kaplan argues: "Looking relations are determined by history, tradition, power hierarchies, politics, economics. Mythic or imaginary ideas about nation, national identity, and race all structure how one looks, but these myths are in turn closely linked to class, politics and economic relations"(4). Kaplan argues that the imperial/colonial gaze constructs the western subject as central, just as the male gaze assumes the male subject as primary: "By the imperial gaze, I mean a gaze structure which fails to understand that, as Edward said phrases it, non American peoples have integral cultures and lives that work according to their own, albeit, different, logic"(78). Kaplan adds that the imperial gaze, just as the male gaze, is one which objectifies, "one that refuses mutual gazing, mutual subject-to-subject recognition"(79). In other words, it refuses "a looking relation"(79). Therefore the colonial gaze is seen as intrusive, unable to comprehend what it seeks to codify. It attempts at the objectification and subjugation of the colonized body, but according to Kaplan is limited: "anxiety prevents this gaze from actually seeing the people gazed at"(78), an anxiety which is predicated on their own vulnerability.

subjugation and appropriation of the other. The photographers presented such work as a commodity for the European audience and much of colonial photography was intended for market consumption. They fed into the European ideology of consumption and the photographers were producers of commodities for the market, and the production of images perfectly suited the growing commodity-based culture. Sarah Graham-Browne, with reference to Middle Eastern colonial photography has argued that orientalist photographs reflect multiple power relations, and that each photograph is a "transform[ation of] a situation of unequal power into a visual image"(36).

Likewise, scenes in Ceylon were envisioned from a position of cultural and political hegemony.[39] Sights of Ceylon became a profitable enterprise within the commodity spectacle. Nineteenth century colonial photographers of Ceylon traveled the country in an attempt to classify and catalog scenery, ruins, monuments, holy places and their exotic inhabitants. Of these, images of trade, produce, historical sites and exotic scenery dominate nineteenth-century colonial photography of Ceylon. Of course these images were circulated as evidential documentary assisting the colonial photographers in their efforts create and support myths of "savagery" and "scientific" difference to the Victorian culture.[40] Yet of equal importance was the global market. As Ismeth Raheem

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[39] Eleanor Hight and Gary D. Sampson observe that the photographer's perception of the subject is "influenced and reinforced by a diverse array of familiar administrative practices, commercial enterprises, artistic and literary traditions, as well as the ongoing scientific investigation and classification of racial types"(2). By the 1850's, colonial photography had already been firmly established in the British colonies, including Ceylon, and its role in the production of colonialist ideology and culture clearly understood. Ismeth Raheem and Percy Colin Thome note the establishment of the Ethnographic society in 1843, which began the large scale documentation of the native. Cameron would have been certainly familiar with these practices. In fact, photography was introduced in Ceylon in the 1840's, and by the 1880's, it was well established and adopted for public and private use, of which documentation was primary.

[40] See Edward Said's argument in Orientalism that the orient is conceived in order to justify western dominance and is a mode of knowledge which constructs the non west as the other.

and Percy Colin Thome point out, "the majority of photographs falling under the category of ethnographic views were often embarrassingly banal, not so much in terms of their pictorial content, but rather the accompanying description" (46). Yet as they add, "the ethnographic theme, namely the material culture of remote and exotic peoples with their fascinating costumes and weird 'rituals', was a lucrative field providing a global market that [the photographers] exploited to the fullest"(46).[41]

Economics of empire and photography are interrelated in Ceylon. In the 1830s, Ceylon's socioeconomic landscape transitioned from a colonial outpost to a plantation economy. During the late nineteenth century the island was increasingly accessible and profitable. The coffee industry was booming, and the "desire to secure by legislation more and better communications to facilitate the export of coffee"(Bailey, 119) led to the improvement of roads and the construction of a railway line from Colombo to Kandy.[42] John Falconer notes that the "construction of roads and railways, and the improvement of harbours led to the expansion of Ceylon's plantation economy, bringing a large influx of Europeans and stimulating an interest in the island which was catered for by a variety of illustrated books"(39). Photography indeed substantiated and validated this economic enterprise, launching colonial Ceylon into modernity, providing visual testimonia to a new capitalist era characterized by the interplay of visual images with power and knowledge.

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[41] John Falconer with Ismeth Raheem describes how Henry Cave, the photographer, recognized the commercial potential of Ceylon, "cannily anticipat[ing] the simultaneous shrinking of the photographic market and growth of the tourist industry, using his photographs in a successful series of books which both publicized the island's attractions and served as guide books for visitors"(11).

[42] The railway system was introduced to Ceylon in the 1850s during British rule under the patronage of Governor, Sir Henry Ward (1855-1860). It was initially built to transport coffee from the hill country to Colombo for shipment. The Colombo to Kandy line was one of the main lines in the railways.

Falconer, in his discussion of major firms which dominated photography of Ceylon, describes resident photographers such as W.H. Skeen and Charles T. Scowen who were well established in Ceylon during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Falconer notes that, for instance, Skeen's success is largely due to the economic revival in Ceylon, when the opening of the railway becomes a further incentive to the coffee industry of the island. As Falconer points out, the firm of Skeen and company "was started at an economically propitious moment" (42) and it produced a series of photographs illustrative of this coffee culture of Ceylon, creating "this branch of documentation their specialty" (42). In fact, according to Falconer, early announcements from the photographic firm advertised, "Wilshaw and Skeen's series illustrative of coffee culture on Ceylon, from the felling of the forest to the shipment of the berry" (quoted in Falconer, 42). Even when the coffee cultivation was threatened with blight in 1868, and was replaced by tea, Skeen and Co. "brought the same techniques to bear, producing in the 1880s a series of 30 photographs illustrating all aspects of the new industry" (Falconer 42).

Hence such photographic firms displayed "an unpretentious use of the camera to demonstrate with great clarity the various stages of production, with each figure in the photograph meticulously arranged in the attitude most revealing and characteristic of his job"(Falconer 42). Falconer also notes that the same clear, documentary style was "applied to the cinnamon, cocoa, rubber, cardamom and plumbago industries" (42), providing a "fascinating pictorial account of an important period in Ceylon's economic growth"(Falconer 42). Within this global market, the colonized were of immense use. John Ferguson's text titled *Ceylon in 1883: the Leading Crown Colony of the British*

Empire is evidence of such linkage. Ferguson sets out to describe, as his subtitle indicates, "[t]he progress made since 1803 under successive British Governors, and of the present condition of its agricultural and commercial enterprises", and the "Resources Awaiting Development by Capitalists" (1). Step by step, the author documents the legislative and social improvements, and the growth in agricultural and planting industries of Ceylon. He attempts not only to outline the progress made by the British but also to point out "how many reasons there are for [British capitalists] to forbear condemnation, and for his still looking on this colony as one of the best of British dependencies for the judicious investment of capital"(93).

Yet he is also quick to add, to the subtitle itself, that his text does describe "[t]he Unequalled Attractions of Hill Climate and Scenery Offered to Visitors"(1) as well. Ferguson devotes a chapter to attractions for the traveler, amongst which the inhabitants contribute to the visual spectacle. While outlining scenic attractions for the "intelligent visitor or traveler, to the botanist, the antiquarian or the man of science, the orientalist, or even to the politician and the sociologist"(103), the colonized is appropriated into the landscape, describing the "crowded native parts of the town, teeming with every variety of oriental race and costume"(107). His text is interspersed with ethnographic, pictorial images of the colonized, some of which are images of a low country Sinhalese man and woman, a Kandyan chief, and a Moorman.[43] They are incorporated into the visual economy of people as images, where the Victorian spectators could direct their gaze

[43] The people of Ceylon were divided into primarily four ethnic groups in the nineteenth century---the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Muslims, and the Burghers. A distinction was made between the more conservative "Kandyan" Sinhalese, of the Kingdom of Kandy which resisted foreign rule until 1815 and the more liberal "low-country" Sinhalese of the plains and coast of Ceylon, who were subject to western influences for centuries. For a further discussion, see Patrick Peebles.

towards this Ceylonese spectacle presented for their pleasure, which instilled a sense of omnipresence.

Hence the inhabitants become marketable in this economy of circulation, where the Ceylonese are photographed with an eye for the strange and the exotic. In an effort to capture each and every "type" of people, photographers seek Ceylonese in various poses, either seated or standing.[44] They are ethnographic in flavor and people are reduced to racial types, documented in terms of the different communities- the Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and Malays.[45] The costumes and ornaments of these individuals are a focal point of interest and they are portrayed as bearers of specific cultural traits. For instance, photographs of up country and low country chiefs, Sinhalese, Tamil, and Moor men and women, abound. The Kandyan chiefs, with their elaborate apparel and accessories, are a staple in the work of many a photographer of Ceylon. Stock images such as the print of the Sinhalese Headman by Charles T. Scowen proudly displaying his regalia set against a blank backdrop is evidence of such photography. While such images work in the service of the colonial economy, erasing the violence of colonial relations of production, exhibiting its imperial subjects untouched by the political, social and economic exploitation wrought by colonization, the varied human landscape of Ceylon is flattened and individuals are forced into unproblematic and naturalized categories, thereby denying

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[44] Such practices have been seen as connoting ethnographic photographic practices. With the advent of disciplines such as physical anthropology, photography became increasingly valuable. It could create visible racial markers which could distinguish one race from another. As Hight and Sampson state, " 'type' or specimen prints were crucial and "a non-European person under colonial scrutiny was posed partially or even totally unclothed against a plain or calibrated backdrop to create a profile, frontal or posterior view"(3). Such prints could provide "documentary" evidence of various "inferior" native types, further justifying the colonial project.

[45] The Malay population are proportionally a very small ethnic group in Sri Lanka. They originally comprised of the Javanese/Malay ruling class who were exiled to the island by the Dutch in Java.

the native agency.

Desiring the Ceylonese Female Body: Constructing the Erotic

Amidst such spectacle, portraits of local women play a critical role in the stock list of subjects popular in Ceylonese images. In travel and exploration writings, the political, social and sexual power of the male European traveler-explorer is inscribed especially on colonized female bodies. Anne McClintock notes that "[i]n myriad ways, women served as mediating and threshold figures by means of which men oriented themselves in [colonial] space, as agents of power and agents of knowledge"(24).[46] She notes how "female figures were planted like fetishes at the ambiguous points of contact, at borders and orifices of the contest zone"(24). Women are not only used as sex objects but metaphors for the east and what it embodies. While the colonized territory is feminized, the bodies of native women are appropriated as well as distorted by claims of sexual excessiveness or abnormality. As Sander Gilman observes, it was "a commonplace that the primitive was associated with unbridled sexuality" (248).

This certainly becomes the case with many of the representations of the Ceylonese women, which are hardly homogeneous. Producing rather than reflecting reality, colonial photographers in Ceylon utilized the female body to construct fictions of the colonized. Besides portraits of local women representative of various ethnic

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[46] See George Calladine for an account of how Ceylonese women were subject to sexual exploitation. Calladine comments that "the 19th Regiment left more children than any regiment leaving the country before". He describes how, when his regiment is about to leave Galle, they had "such a number of black women coming alongside, who were left behind, some with three and four children"(77). He himself recounts an incident when he decides to "take a black girl, and I was not long before I got one"(72), and later refers to her as "my poor little Dingy"(75). As Calladine notes, such an affair is easily manageable as "[a]ll a man had to do was to get the officer of his company's leave in writing, and he was then allowed to be out of the company's mess and to sleep out of barracks"(72). Also see Christopher Ondaatje for an account of how a Tamil woman is raped by Pablo Neruda, while he serves as a Chilean diplomat in Ceylon

communities and their respective attire, there is a substantial body of photographs depicting women in erotic and sensuous poses in Ceylon. For instance, Charles T. Scowen & Co. is noted for portraits of people and as Falconer points out, "the beautifully lit and simply composed studies of racial types" (46) are worthy of credit. Yet this is not to disregard the countless number of near pornographic and titillating photographs of sexually suggestive, bare breasted women by Skeen, A. W. Plate and other anonymous photographers, supposedly taken under the pretension of ethnographic documentation of the women, which construct Ceylon as an erotic site, "exploiting as James R. Ryan notes, the "existing associations between the orient and sex making apparently realistic evidence available on a ever large scale" (53).

Such titillating photographs also utilize the exotic backdrop with scenes of tropical vegetation. Many abandon the studio premises and utilize natural settings outdoors instead in order to produce such exotic and erotic imagery. Local women are immersed in a "tropical paradise", set against landscape backdrops, in various poses. Some of them are seen posing with various objects such as water vessels. Ryan himself notes that "[a]mong the portraits of people from Ceylon made by the commercial photographers W.L.H. Skeen & Co. in the 1870s and 1880s are several which picture women against a background of luxuriant tropical vegetation"(53). In fact among the portraits of people from Ceylon made by W.L.H. Skeen and company, exotic women against a background of tropical vegetation can be seen frequently.

These photographs have been instrumental in constructing Ceylon as a tropicalised and exotic site, embodied through the sexualized oriental woman. Ryan, in his discussion of Samuel Bourne's photographic work in India, argues that the images of

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in the 1920's, and that "his power as a white man in Ceylon" (127) facilitates his act.

the sexually exotic oriental women "found their greatest expression in the salacious and pornographic photographs of the colonial harem"(53), and that "drawing on an established iconography of the Orient in painting, literature and architecture, photographers invented their own 'Orient', in the studio with props, backdrops and the directed poses of scantily dressed 'Oriental' female models"(53).

For instance, of the photographs of Ceylonese women, created and circulated by many nineteenth-century photographers such as W. L. H. Skeen, images of the "Rodiya" women create a visual staple.[47] Let us examine one such photograph in detail, of a "Rodiya" woman by A.W. Plate and Co. (fig. 2). Cast in a studio setting against an intricately patterned backdrop, a scantily dressed young female, identified as a "Rodiya woman" stands facing the viewer. While her body is in a frontal pose, her face is slightly set at an angle, allowing the viewer to see her face in profile. While her own gaze seems coy and erotic, it is her posture which is far more erotically charged. She stands upright and keeps her hands behind her back, perking her chest. Her sexually suggestive pose invites the viewer to gaze at her semi-exposed body. The lack of props directs the viewer towards her body, and the necklace and bangles adorning her do not draw away the viewer from gazing at her sexualized body. In fact the strategic placement of the bead necklace ensures that a pornographic undertone is maintained. The patterned backdrop in a studio setting, without the pretense of a more realistic setting, strips the woman of any historical or social context, reducing her to her semi-exposed body.

But it is the dialectic of veiling and unveiling performed through the photograph

[47] According to the traditional caste system of Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century, the "Rodiya" caste or the "untouchables" were socially, culturally and economically marginalized and exploited. They could only wear caste-specific attire, and during the Kandyan Kingdom both "Rodiya" men and women were prohibited from covering their upper bodies.

which primarily contributes to the erotica in this print. The print promises the viewer a voyeuristic look at her body, when the fabric only half conceals her upper body. The cloth she wears is draped provocatively against her chest so as to leave her left breast bare. Yet the photograph also suggests a fluidity of the fabric she is draped with, hinting at her body being gradually unveiled in the photograph. The cloth that covers her partially is draped precariously across her upper chest and threatens revealment. Thus the photograph seems to enact a kind of a "strip tease", playing with the notion of the viewer's expectation of the removal of her clothes.

Fig. 2. Plate, A.W.A. & Co. Rodiya Woman. The Palinda de Silva Collection, http://www.imagesofceylon.com/ioc-people7.htm. Slide 136. Reproduced with the kind permission of Palinda de Silva.

Therefore she is blatantly subjected to an intrusive colonial gaze, when the

photograph becomes a titillating pornographic representation of a near naked woman. She is exhibited as open, sexually free, and available, her semi-exposed body a vehicle for the articulation of Victorian notions of difference. Such visual delights clearly conflate the exotic with the erotic, when she is seen provocatively presented as seductive and fascinating, yet "primitive", different and Other in her semi-nudity. Such a spectacle is justified under the pretext of ethnographic interest in the "Rodiya" women, and the desire for the construction of the Rodiya woman's body as erotic is concealed under the guise of anthropological interest in the outcastes of nineteenth-century Ceylon.

The strategy of othering fundamental to the colonial discourses is crystallized through such images of women. This photograph demonstrates how Orientalist photographs attempt to define otherness, expressing western men's sexual fantasies of the native female body as well as conjuring images of backwardness and depravity of the colonized by emphasizing the woman's social position through caste. This reveals how nineteenth-century colonial discourses harnessed colonial photography to equate the degenerate quality of the colonized to the native female body.

But what is Cameron's position vis-à-vis this power discourse based on the conventional premise that the Victorian spectators, through colonial photography, could focus on and consume the colonized, creating an asymmetrical power relationship? Do her Ceylonese photographs construct sexual and cultural otherness and promote social and racial hierarchy? Is it an exploitative relationship between Cameron, the photographer and her Ceylonese subject? Or are there moments of ambiguity, incoherence and rupture that these representations convey which complicate her relationship with her Ceylonese subject?

Ceylon did hold a sense of exoticism for Cameron.[48] For example, Viscount Hinchingbrook, in his *Diary in Ceylon and India, 1878-9*, sets out to describe his first few days in Ceylon and recounts calling on Cameron at the Galle Face Hotel, where she has "come out to visit her sons in Ceylon"(5).[49] He describes Cameron, immediately upon her arrival in Ceylon, eager for the exotic, making arrangements "for some snake-charmers to go through their performances"(6), and states that "their tricks are capital"(6). Ceylon certainly was exotic for Cameron and she describes her feelings as such: "My wonder for instance has been tamed but not my worship--The glorious beauty of the scenery--the primitive simplicity of the inhabitants & the charms of the climate all make me love and admire Ceylon more and more"(quoted in Cox and Ford 483). But the question arises whether we can reduce Cameron's prints as exotic images of the colonized, in keeping with Cameron's own statement on Ceylon. Is she the "privileged" and detached observer, where the native is appropriated for the exotic aesthetic of Ceylon? While Plate's image of the "Rodiya woman" certainly caters to metropolitan imaginations, I argue that Cameron's photographs of the Ceylonese woman cannot be unproblematically regarded as exotic. Although Ceylon becomes a cabinet of curiosities for Cameron, according to Hinchingbrook and her own statements, I will show that Cameron's Ceylonese photographs offer fertile ground to analyze the extent to which the power dynamic between the photographer and the photographic subject complicates the

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[48] Julia Margaret Cameron's trip to Ceylon in 1875 came about as a result of her husband's wish to retire in the colony amongst his numerous estates, and be with their sons who were all in administrative posts in colonial Ceylon. Though restricted by the tropical climate which was not conducive to photography, she nevertheless engaged in photographing the Ceylonese.

[49] The Galle Face Hotel was built in 1864 in Colombo, and is one of the oldest hotels in Asia. For many travelers during the colonial times, it was the first step in Ceylon and it played host to numerous guests who were passing through Ceylon.

construction of the exotic native woman in late nineteenth-century Ceylon.

The Quest for Beauty: Cameron's English Maidservants Vs "Natives"

Cameron's prints have been seen as partaking in similar ethnographic projects when her photographic practices are viewed as conforming to the objectifying practices of many a colonial photographer during the period. One predominant reason given by critics has been their lack of finesse compared with her English prints. Several critics such as Joanne Lukitsh have observed how her Ceylonese pictures differ, in composition and lighting, from her English prints. For instance, Cameron did choose to pose bare-chested men in Ceylon as Lukitsh points out, a practice she never resorted to while in England. Victoria Olsen also notes half or full length prints of the Ceylonese captured at a greater distance instead of close-ups of expressive faces in Cameron's English oeuvre, perhaps suggesting the distance between the colonial photographer and the native subject. After all, Cameron's Ceylonese models were primarily her domestic servants. As colonial and domestic subjects, Cameron's models would have very little agency. They are confined in their roles as the native subjects and domestic servants, local women being doubly deprived of power as natives as well as women under white patriarchal dominance. As photographic subjects, they have less control than Cameron's English models in how they can position themselves in front of the camera.[50]

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[50] Cameron's English models were mostly her domestic maids. As Colin Ford points out, her most frequent female models, besides her niece Julia Jackson and May Prinsep, an orphan adopted by her sister Sara, were "two of the Camerons' maidservants, Mary Ann Hillier (1847-1936) and Mary Ryan (1848-1914)"(54). Sylvia Wolf remarks that, "Cameron's response to beauty, eradicating class as it did, was so extreme as to constitute an almost political statement. Her tableaux are parables of radical democracy, or, seen from a slightly different angle, real-life fairy tales: in Cameron's glass house, Cinderella is always becoming a princess"(15). But Joanne Lukitsch has observed in Julia Margaret Cameron that posing for Cameron was painfully long and a difficult task, as the "large lens and negative entailed especially long exposures, in which any motion made by the model could ruin the desired result"(10). Hence it is pertinent

But what is intriguing is that Cameron's English models were mostly her domestic maids, just as her Ceylonese models were mostly her Tamil domestic servants, in addition to a few Tamil plantation workers. Therefore, at this moment, it is important to briefly juxtapose her Ceylonese work against her English work in order to examine why the Ceylonese oeuvre has been undervalued in comparison to her English prints. As Julian Cox and Colin Ford note, two thirds of Cameron's English photographs are portraits of women. While her portraits of eminent men sought to capture the illustrious males of the nineteenth century Victorian England, her portraits of women targeted "beauty, a quest pursued in the Victorian world with almost religious fervor" (175). While her English oeuvre does consist of a few portraits of notable women at the time such as Marianne North, Cameron's emphasis was certainly on the dream-like portraits of beautiful women, keeping with her longing 'to arrest all beauty that came before [her]"(Gernsheim 180). As Sylvia Wolf notes, Cameron usually cast her English women as embodying "sorrow, resignation, composure, solemnity, and love, determined love, love which will have a hard time of it" (Wolf 17). Olsen notes that Cameron's "palette of emotion is extremely limited: despair, sorrow, melancholy, contentment, calm, thoughtfulness are possible; anger, joy, scorn, hatred are not" (160).

While her male portraits are dramatically lit close-ups, the photographs of these "fair" women, being vivid and artistic, are composed with a "generally softening, flattering, and more blandly conventional effect" (Ford 175). In fact, many of Cameron's images of women have been composed as genre pictures where the women are cast as individuals from literary, classical and biblical narratives. Influenced by the

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when Lukitsch adds that "sessions before the camera may have been personally rewarding, but they were an exchange of one type of household service for another" (11).

tableaux vivant and the theatre, Cameron sets her models in various poses, dressing up her female and child models in costumes, "making endless Madonnas and May Queens and Foolish Virgins and Wise Virgins"(Ford 69). Instead of portraying the women as themselves, such theatrical-like illustrations depicted women models as imaginary beings. For instance, the Madonna prints of draped figures of the Virgin helped Cameron construct "an idea of femininity that combines wholesomeness with qualities of sensuality and vulnerability" (Cox 130).

The Gardener's Daughter (1867) is one such example (fig. 3). It depicts a full length profile of a young woman placed against a garden, a backdrop Cameron often preferred for some of her dreamy images of Victorian women. Modeled by Mary Ryan, one of Cameron's English maidservants, the woman constructs a picture of femininity. With a foliage arch behind her which reveals the distant valley at the back, she looks away from the camera, and her downcast eyes gaze at the flower she delicately holds in one of her hands in a pensive expression. Her face is visible while her long wavy hair falls over her back, streaming down her long dress, and the distant expression in her eyes attributes to the woman an ethereal quality. The way she is positioned within the frame so that her face almost sinks into the wall caressing the foliage guides the viewer to take note of her vulnerable countenance. It is an expression of sadness and a sense of solemnity that captures the viewer. Lukitsh points out that in these images of single female figures amidst flowers, "a more diffuse lighting makes the overall image more harmonious, suggesting the symbolic connection between femininity and nature"(*Cameron* 11). She is depicted as gentle and mild, evoking a sense of humility and spirituality.

Fig. 3. Cameron, Julia Margaret. The Gardener's Daughter. Reproduced with the kind permission of the National Media Museum, London.

Sylvia Wolf observes that mostly "people of Sri Lanka did not have the same effect on her imagination as did the people--gentry and peasantry alike--of the isle of Wight" (15). She notes that "the dramas of [Cameron's] mind were performed by white actresses" and that "today we can't help but notice that, for Cameron, this ideal world of Arthurian ladies and Shakespearean heroines was not populated by women of color" (15). Yet if the Ceylonese portraits do not hold the same mystical quality as her English prints,

and are more ethnographic, one wonders what prevented Cameron's Ceylonese prints from entering that global market eager for lucrative prints.[51] After all, Cameron's photographs of the Ceylonese could be read as ethnographic, where indications of spirituality and vulnerability present in her English oeuvre are absent.[52]

Cameron was certainly keen on the circulation of her English prints. Cox and Ford note that despite lofty ideals, "Cameron expected much in return, not least to make a reasonable living from her efforts"(41).[53] They add that "photography offered the possibility of a steady, if not spectacular, income"(41). They further state that her "extraordinary rate of production in part signals her commercial intentions, as does the outpourings of breathless correspondence with family members and friends, which reveals a feverish preoccupation with the need to make a living and gain recognition for her work"(43). As Cox and Ford demonstrate, her illustrations of Tennyson's poetry certainly show that she "embraced [the growing] market in the early 1870s" (90). Wolf confirms this by drawing upon Cameron's annotated price list of photographs, noting her commercial intentions.

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[51] It is problematic to argue that Cameron's agenda is ethnographic from the very outset because she modifies the colonial portrait of women by not positioning these women against a blank wall and photographing them in a "documentary" style. She actually uproots the native from an ethnological setting, clearly signaling a departure from visualising the native as an exhibit on display. The women are pictured against a setting that is devoid of ethnological markers. She adopts blank garden like settings instead which do not hint at the exoticism of the tropics. It does not place them in the tropical island, signaling Cameron's refusal to place and categorize the native.

[52] Of the 26 Ceylonese photographs that survive, 10 are single portraits of native women. The women are mostly posed in their native day to-day dress, except for a few where the women models are wrapped in robes. Among these are half length portraits, three quarter length ones as well as full-length photographs. While many emphasize the faces and figures of the native women, some also depict women at work, carrying pitchers of water.

[53] Cameron remarks that she seeks a high moral purpose in photography when she declares, "My aspirations are to ennoble photography and to secure for it the character and uses of High Art by combining the real and Ideal and sacrificing nothing of the Truth by all possible devotion to Poetry and beauty" (quoted in Julian Cox and Colin Ford, 41).

However, her lack of distribution of her Ceylonese prints cannot be read solely as a marker of their inferiority. Through an analysis of Cameron's Ceylonese prints of women, I will argue that Cameron's Ceylonese photographs cannot be labeled as ethnographic, as a mere foil to her English images. Instead, I claim that its distinct characteristics open up alternative angles from which to approach the Ceylonese oeuvre. I will show how they partially subvert the orientalist discourses around the body of the colonized woman, exposing the inherent instability and ambivalence of these photographs.

Representing the Native Woman: Cameron's Ceylonese Photographs

I begin with a Ceylonese print by Cameron somewhat reminiscent of *The Gardener's Daughter*, where a woman is placed against a hedge with vines. Seemingly stripped of the spirituality embodied in *The Gardener's Daughter,* Cameron's photograph of a Ceylonese woman outwardly panders to the same desires exhibited in the photograph of the "Rodiya" woman (fig. 2) which focuses gratuitously on the woman's body, constructing the woman primarily as an object of male erotic desire. Titled "Woman, Ceylon" (1875-9), this seems to mechanically construct a profile of a native body of a Ceylonese woman (fig. 4). Exhibiting bare skin, which usually connotes primitivity in colonial photography, the body, not her gaze, is turned towards the viewer. The face is not clearly discernible although the light does slightly trace the outline of her features. Her expression cannot be distinctly seen, nor can her eyes. The lighting reveals the bare shoulders and arms to the viewer. Although Cameron tries to emphasize her hand with its numerous rings, the effect is that the viewer concentrates on the bare flesh even more.

The rings and the chain around her neck draw the viewer's eyes not to the jewelry but to the bare back that is dramatically illuminated. The light strongly cuts across her back, offering up her body further for voyeuristic pleasure and evoking sensuality.

The subject shields her body from such an intrusion by covering herself with her arms on the pretext of displaying her rings on her hand. She draws her arms towards her in a self protective gesture. It is as if she realizes the violation taking place, as the lighting seems to cut across her bare shoulders, back and neck. Cameron's choice of frame and cropping heightens this effect as well. The round frame clearly leaves no room for the viewers to divert their gaze. They are directed to the center of the frame where Cameron places her model. And the fact that the background is almost in the dark and the exposed body sharply focused by the light intensifies this effect. Emphasizing the bare, uncovered skin speaks the language of sensuality and difference while these bodies become not only sites of pleasure for the voyeuristic gaze of the viewer but also sites of violence where the women become objectified.

While this photograph literally enacts a Ceylonese woman's entrapment within imperial ideological apparatuses, catering to the western viewers, it cannot offer complete visual proof of the woman's subordination to colonial gazes because of certain aspects of her positioning and expression. I will show that the Ceylonese print suggests defiance, when the models' almost rigid demeanor mocks the vulnerability of the English models, as well as the objectified, sexualized subjectification of native women in stereotypical ethnographic/documentary images.

Fig. 4. Cameron, Julia Margaret. Woman, Ceylon. Gernsheim Collection. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

The Ceylonese model hints at a sense of insubordination when she reveals indifference rather than compliance; the woman suggests a sense of disengagement, an aloofness which the English model does not convey. It is at this instance that Bal's notion of the focaliser becomes important. As stated in the introduction, with the recognition of the focalisers or the various positions of viewing available to the viewer, the stance of the viewer undergoes change.[54] The almost impassive expression on the woman's face in Cameron's photograph allows the viewers a point of entry into the image acting as a

[54] For a fuller discussion of Mieke Bal's explanation of how the focalisers operate in an image, see the introduction.

focaliser. Her expression hints at a sense of alienation and thereby detachment. Though her body is seemingly the spectacle, the expression serves to empower the woman. Her expression speaks of a power in which the viewers cannot participate. She is hardly submissive or erotic. In fact, she looks ill at ease, her eyebrows drawn together in disdain. She looks away into what is not shown in the colonial photograph, the space beyond the field-of-vision. Although the circular compressed visual space guides the viewers to gaze at her body, her eyes do not sanction or appeal to such action. The viewing vantage points afforded through her eyes conflict with other vantage points which control the female body, privileging the visual position of the male observers. The result is that the photograph does not accord the viewers uninhibited pleasure of gazing at the woman model.

Another instance when the viewers follow the focaliser, the direction of the woman's gaze, unable to linger on her body, is evident through Cameron's photograph of the same woman standing by fence and vines, documented as " Untitled, (Ceylon)" (1875-9). This depicts the young native woman placed against a picturesque backdrop (fig. 5).[55]

[55] Women in garden settings are a recurring theme in Cameron's English work. For instance, Cameron produces many a print of her favorite niece, Julia Jackson in a garden. Yet prints like 'The Sisters' where two women pose face to face, are especially reminiscent of the Ceylonese print. Yet a characteristic feature in these images is the sense of solemnity and resignation in their countenance. Joanne Lukitsh in Julia Margaret Cameron points out that in these images of female figures amidst flowers, "a more diffuse lighting makes the overall image more harmonious, suggesting the symbolic connection between femininity and nature" (11). Ethereal in nature, upholding ennobling sentiments such as spirituality, these English photographs demonstrate a sense of peace and calm.

Fig. 5. Cameron, Julia Margaret. British, 1815-1879, Untitled, (Ceylon), c. 1875, Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 23.5 x 16.8 cm, Harriott A. Fox Endowment, 1970.844, The Art Institute of Chicago. Photography. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Though reminiscent of her English print, the focus is more on her body in this photograph, while her English print emphasizes the woman model's face. It portrays the woman in a three-quarter length profile, unnamed, but not identified by either race, religion, or occupation. She stands, placed against a grid like hedge, and is dressed in a plain sari which is draped over her right shoulders, leaving the left shoulder and arm bare. Her hair is tied at the back but loosely, resulting in many strands escaping the knot and

falling down her back. She displays a few ornaments which include a single bangle and a one strand necklace. Her face is hardly discernible as she is pictured sideways but she seems to have a solemn expression on her face. She crosses her arms in front of her and has her right leg forward, the left leg back, as if she is taking a long stride forward. Her hands align with the positioning of her legs and head, constructing symmetrical angles in the image.

The woman blends into the exotic backdrop of bamboo looking shoots and leaves. She almost merges with the leaves that surround her. There is no distinct difference between the plants and the shades of the sari that she wears. Her sari blends in with the color of the leaves whereas her bared flesh takes on the hue of the bamboo shoots. One arm seems to appear out of the hedge whereas one disappears into the leaves. Her hair falls down her back but vanishes from the eye of the viewers after a certain point. We perceive her somewhat awkward pose, the body almost twisted, her hips facing the camera while her upper body is turned sideways. Her hands are held in an equally forced fashion, one arm forward while the other is a little back. But what is interesting is the eroticism in the photograph. Her thighs spread out provocatively, emphasizing her lower body. Her sari splits into two halves when she parts her legs, projecting the sexuality of the native woman, deliberately putting her body on display. Yet it is not just her posture which has a marked feeling of eroticism. The multiple drapes and folds of the sari too conceal, while also emphasizing the body beneath, producing an image just as erotic.

However, multiple focalisers once again complicate a simplistic viewing of Cameron's Ceylonese prints. While on one level, one can argue that Cameron depicts a native arranged before the camera, literally trapped against the hedge suggested through

the positioning of her whole body, the focalisers introduce tension to the image. While the photograph insinuates sex and submission, satisfying the western appetite for visual images of the native that serve to affirm the European's cultural and racial difference, it also operates at another level. Upon close examination, the image tells a double story of the erotic and available woman.

Even though the woman model initially gives the impression of being literally confined by the frame, the form of the arms, hand, and light lead the viewers' gaze up to the face, the more interesting element in the image, an element devoid of the erotic. From this view point, the direction of the woman's gaze complicates a simplistic viewing of the photograph, as in the previous image. Instead of being made subservient to the gaze of the spectator, the woman model directs the spectator's gaze. Cameron disrupts the image of native women as passive objects and in turn frustrates the viewers when she grants the woman model a look that moves beyond the frame. Cameron poses her as such so that the woman produces visual spaces of her own, becoming a consumer of an image by looking sharply at a particular object which eludes the viewers. She is not totally contained in the photographic space. Therefore Cameron refuses to cooperate with the viewers and allow them uninhibited sexual access to visual gratification of the woman's body. The viewers' gaze on her body is immediately reflected back onto the direction of her look, making the viewers aware of the process of looking. They are compelled to locate their gaze on a visual space that guarantees them no access, a space which they cannot penetrate, frustrating their gazes altogether. Although the woman does not directly confront the camera, and return the viewers' gaze with hostility or indifference, her distant look beyond the visual frame frustrates them.

An alternative vantage point is found when the blurring of the lower portion of the frame draws attention to the sense of unavailability of this image. Cameron was noted for her creative manipulations, where she "engraved lines onto the negative, scratched and painted the collodion, and doctored the image as necessary to suit her expressive needs" (Cox and Ford 52). Likewise the blurring of the image suggests the woman model almost disappearing into the frame, assigning her an ethereal and ephemeral quality. Yet the result is not a sense of mysticism which is usually conveyed in her English prints. The realist pretensions of photography are defied when the woman is made to pose as such. The documentary claims of especially colonial photography are problematised when the result is a sense of disintegration or fracture. The photograph is fragmented, when the woman's body gets abruptly cut into two planes, the lower-half merging with the frame.

The positioning of her lower body provides another viewing point through which to approach the image. Of course, while such a staging speaks of her literal capture by the camera, it also grants her subjectivity. She is not and cannot be completely contained within the frame as the photograph suggests movement. She gives the impression of being in motion rather than being trapped, almost taking a long stride towards the left of the frame. Cameron is not deliberately subjecting the woman to a debilitating gaze by fixing her body on to the plane of the photograph. The sense of motion defies the manner in which natives are portrayed, as arrested on to the image. The woman is allowed movement and agency through her very posture of motion.

It is the focaliser which opens up a space for contention within the photographic space in Cameron's Ceylonese photography. The viewers' gaze is reversed, redirected

and re-presented, shifted back towards them. Cameron's half length, frontal portrait of a Ceylonese woman demonstrates this well.

Fig. 6. Cameron, Julia Margaret. British, 1815-1879, Untitled, (Ceylon), c. 1875, albumen print from wet collodion negative, 22.2 x 17.7 cm, Harriott A. Fox Endowment, 1970.840, The Art Institute of Chicago. Photography. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Untitled, the photograph depicts a young woman looking back, though not directly at the viewer/ photographer (fig. 6). She is set against a plain backdrop emphasizing her face and figure. She is slightly decentered, her left arm partially cut off from the frame. Her wavy hair is tied at the back, with a front parting and a few wisps of

hair escaping her knot, framing her oval face. Through several strands of hair, one can see slight traces of hoop earrings. Eyes wide open, and lips slightly apart, showing somewhat widely spaced teeth, she is posed against a plain backdrop, highlighting her face and dress. She is in native dress, a sari, of which the upper portion is visible to the viewer. A brocade border hems the plain sari, visible to the viewer through the necklaces she wears. The sari drapes over her bare left shoulder in various folds revealing her bare neck and left arm. Her right shoulder and arm too remain exposed. Her several necklaces of various lengths, including a choker, are made of mostly beads. She wears armlets, two bands on each of her arms.

A cursory glance would lead us to assume that this is another portrait of a colonized woman, reminiscent of many other ethnographic photographs taken at the time, documenting the native in various frontal, and profile views. Devoid of subjectivity, not even labeled as a Ceylonese, she is just another native. Displaying parted lips, revealing uneven teeth, a sense of coarseness usually associated with the native prevails.
But I argue that Cameron opens up spaces for the native woman to articulate her own subjectivity within the photographic space. She assigns an active role to the native woman model.

The woman's posture, gesture, facial expression and eyes all depart from the ethnographic mode. First, the viewers are confronted with her imposing demeanor. Though the photographer has captured her in her lens, she evades any sense of control through her almost commanding pose. Although it is a full frontal, a format very convenient for colonial photography, she is not frozen or fixed. In fact, she is far from static. Despite her status as a domestic servant of Cameron, her self-confident demeanor

is striking. The spectators cannot discern if she is sitting or standing, but the manner in which she poses, with her shoulders back, suggests confidence. But it is her gaze which captures the attention of the viewers. The woman model's very sharp and unflinching gaze is indeed intimidating. It is not a blank stare but a focused gaze. She draws her eyebrows together, further calling attention to her expression. The manner in which Cameron manipulates lighting in her photograph certainly encourages such a reading as well. Though the lighting is subdued, the focus is on her face and figure. While the forehead is somewhat darkened, the woman's eyes become almost illuminated, emphasizing her gaze.

The woman's gaze acts as the focaliser, granting an enticing avenue into the photograph. The focaliser surfaces through the way Cameron positions her camera. She photographs the woman at a slight angle, indicated through the way the native's left arm is cut off from the frame and the way the two arms do not align in a straight line. This is also evident through the fall of light on the right and the shadows on the left of the frame. Precisely because of such an angle, the woman model's gaze too is off-centered. Her pupils are directed slightly to the left of the frame. The native's returned look can no longer be interpreted as a reciprocal gaze, acknowledging the gaze of the spectator.

The woman is inaccessible precisely because of her gaze. She does not solemnly confront the viewers but deflects their gaze. By dismantling the binary between the active viewer and the passive object, Cameron assigns native woman the power to look, not by confronting the viewers but by challenging their power to gaze. Therefore the object of the male gaze--the native woman--is displaced, as there is no sole viewing object. Cameron maps out alternative objects/spaces that are not within the command of

the spectator standing outside of the frame. In this process, she assigns a spectatorial position to her native subject apparently caught within the frame, thus interrupting the whole framework of the viewers flaunting masculine control with the power to look and the passive feminized subject who can only be looked upon. Consequently she breaks the unity of the photographer's gaze and that of the spectator.

Therefore Cameron's Ceylonese photographs of women act as a site of transaction and deliberation of power where the viewers' license to look at the woman is thwarted. Power shifts from the viewers to the subject of representation-the Ceylonese woman. This actually, in a strange fashion, attributes a sense of power to the Ceylonese woman. In an era when the colonized native was being meticulously staged in studios with props and the necessary paraphernalia, Cameron stages her models to defy such arrangements.

Hence the focus of all of the three photographs comes to center on the viewers' unease rather than the on the woman model's body. Zizek's analysis of the "returned gaze" assists us in comprehending how such anxiety functions. Elizabeth Wright and Edward Wright elaborate on Zizek's notion of the returned gaze when "[s]omething apparently meaningless invades our familiar 'reality', a disturbance of the on the side of the object, which seems to have an awareness of me from which I am excluded, so that I become strange to myself, and instead of gazing, I am gazed at"(Wright, 11). Rereading Lacan, Zizek comments on how the viewed object itself returns the gaze and regards the spectators, shifting attention from the object to the gaze.[56] Zizek elaborates this notion of

[56] While the gaze in Freudian theory or film theory for example, assumes a historically structured, classed, and gendered viewing subject, Jacques Lacan theorizes the "Gaze" as an element outside of the subject and the object. Lacan explains, "In our relation to things, insofar as this relation is constituted by way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage and

the gaze through a scene from Hitchcock:

> How does Hitchcock shoot a scene in which the subject is approaching some mysterious, "uncanny" object, generally a house? By alternating the subjective view of the approaching object (house) and an objective shot of the subject in motion. Why does this formal procedure as such generate anxiety; why does the approaching object (the house) become "uncanny"? What we have here is precisely the above-mentioned dialectic of eye and gaze: the subject sees the house, but what provokes anxiety is the indefinable feeling that the house itself is somehow already gazing at her, gazing at her from a point that totally escapes her view and thus makes her utterly helpless (126).

While the subject sees the house, the object--the house---seems to return the gaze, inverting the relationship between the subject and object. The Ceylonese prints operate in a similar fashion. Though their looks are not reciprocal, acknowledging and thereby returning the viewers' gaze by dramatically staring back at the camera, they rebuke intruding colonial gazes, with their agenda of classification, control and surveillance by producing gazes of their own which are far from subservient which in turn produce uncanny effects among the spectators. The photographs become contested spaces when, as Zizek notes, the viewers become embroiled more with the gaze that returns indirectly rather than the object---the Ceylonese woman.

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is always eluded in it--that is what we call the gaze" (73). He gives an example of the Gaze through the painting by Hans Holbein called *The Ambassadors* (1533). In this painting, the viewer imagines he or she is in control of seeing, until he/she notices a blot at the bottom of the canvas, which Lacan names as a "strange, suspended, oblique object"(88). It is only by looking at it from the side that he/she can see a skull looking back. Therefore the viewers are denied the mastery of looking and are instead looked back upon. Yet what looks back at the viewers is a non-human object. Lacan suggests that this returned look is the Gaze which critiques the viewer's agency and visual mastery.

Patel, Pattle, Memsahib and Photographer: Cameron's Problematic Positioning in Ceylon

Indeed, Cameron seems to have carefully distinguished her photographic project in Ceylon from representations produced by earlier and contemporary photographers of Ceylon as well as from her own work in England. While on its surface, Cameron's photographic formulations of Ceylonese people reproduce certain colonialist narratives long used to picture the inhabitants, her prints attempt to represents a more complex vision of the colonized. Cameron's particular perspective needs to be analyzed through her precarious position in the colonies. I demonstrate how Cameron's particular positioning in the colonial hierarchy as a woman born and bred in the colonies perhaps helps her articulate a different perspective, thereby further complicating the white representational gaze.

Her status as a professional woman grants her an atypical position. She is not the decorative wife in the colonies dabbling in photography as a trivial pastime. Romita Ray points out that for most British women in the subcontinent, "sketching and painting were confined to genteel pastimes undertaken in privacy" although "a simple hobby to keep the eye and hand occupied proved to be an agreeable solution for adjusting to a foreign landscape"(89). But Cameron is a woman who achieved considerable public recognition for her photographic work, almost on par with some of the renowned men she photographs in Victorian England, her most recent success being the illustrations of the Idylls of Tennyson.[57]

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[57] In 1874, Cameron was invited to produce illustrations for Tennyson's *The Idylls of the King*. These illustrations brought her considerable success, and as Cox and Ford note, they represent "the final flowering of Cameron's photography"(468) before she left for Ceylon.

For example, Viscount Hinchingbrook, a traveler to Ceylon who later compiles his travels in the form of a diary, who is a fellow passenger in the ship, "Peiho", which carries Cameron across to Ceylon, acknowledges Cameron as "celebrated as an artist in photography" while also noting that she is a "sister of Lady Somers" who is "with her husband, formerly of the Indian civil service" who "has come out to visit her sons in Ceylon"(5). This is significant in that Hinchingbrook recognizes Cameron's status in Victorian England as wife, mother and a sister who is well-connected as well as a distinguished photographer.

But as a woman photographer in Ceylon, she enjoys less creative license than male photographers to capture native bodies, especially native men.[58] She has limited viewing points from which to participate in the act of looking in the colonies as a white Victorian woman.[59] As a white woman photographer, Cameron is peculiarly placed. She is subject to patriarchal surveillance as a white woman, with fears of miscegenation rife during the period. Victoria Olsen refers to the "religious and cultural taboos against

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[58] In order to comprehend the workings of the colonial gaze, one must examine how a patriarchal gaze has been theorized, especially since the patriarchal gaze collapses with colonial modes of looking. Laura Mulvey uses Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in a study of cinematic spectatorship to analyze the male patriarchal gaze, failing to adequately theorise how a female gaze can come into being. She argues that in patriarchal society "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (27). This is reflected in the dominant forms of cinema. Films objectify women in relation to 'the controlling male gaze' (33), presenting "woman as image" "(or "spectacle") and man as "bearer of the look" (27). While men do the looking, women are there to be *looked at*. Mulvey later revises her argument and suggest that the female spectator must unconsciously shift between an active masculine and a passive feminine identity.

[59] Indira Ghose describes how the female gaze is 'refracted by other, controlling gazes"(8). Women have always been seen as spectators of empire, located outside of "historical and material conditions"(99), hence effacing their complicity in colonial power relations. Yet arguing against the supposed non involvement of women in empire, Ghose says that what "needs to be scrutinised is the site from which women gaze, that is the positions of power in which they are located"(9). Drawing on poststructuralism, she states that there can be no inherent female gaze as "women are multiply organized across positionalities along several axes and across mutually contradictory discourses"(5). Perception is informed by gender, where seeing as a woman "is determined by the discourses of femininity in circulation"(10). Therefore women become both observer and observed, resulting in a "fractured Gaze"(60).

contact with men outside their families"(253) for Victorian women in colonies, which makes native women more accessible as subjects. Therefore the question is not limited to whether the native subject is worthy of representation but what subjects are appropriate for a woman photographer to engage with.[60] Thus Cameron is precariously positioned in the colonial hierarchy and holds a distinct gaze.

Further, she is also not the stereotypical colonial photographer especially because there are no indications on her part either to make photography a commercial venture in the colonies or to send out her colonial portraits for display. The only account one has of her photographic practices in Ceylon is from Marianne North herself. According to North, Cameron's walls were "covered with magnificent photographs; others were tumbling about the tables, chairs, and floors, with quantities of damp books, all untidy and picturesque"(314). However it is uncertain whether these prints were ones she had taken of the Ceylonese or if they were her previous English images. Yet North does note that Cameron did picture the "natives", stating that Cameron "made some studies of natives" (315).

As a white Victorian woman in the colonies, she certainly wields colonial power and privilege, as her subjects are her domestic servants around her. Ceylon was the

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[60] Two thirds of Cameron's English photographs are portraits of women. While her portraits of eminent men sought to capture the illustrious males of the nineteenth century Victorian England, Julian Cox and Colin Ford note that her portraits of women targeted "beauty, a quest pursued in the Victorian world with almost religious fervor"(175). Though the women are differentiated from the male portraits, where the prints are assembled as dramatically lit close-ups, the photographs of these 'fair' women still command attention, being vivid and artistic, though they are composed with a "generally softening, flattering, and more blandly conventional effect" (Cox & Ford 175). While some have argued that her portraits of women are not accorded the status given to the male portraits, where the women are not represented as individuals but more allegorical and biblical figures, Sylvia Wolf's observation that prints of Cameron's niece Julia Jackson were priced very high and fetched the most amount of money problematises such a view. Therefore Cameron's fascination with the female model cannot be merely reduced to their accessibility as women to a woman photographer.

colonial outpost they could finally settle in and retire at as the Camerons had considerable property in Ceylon, owning several estates in the island, which were looked after by their sons. Yet she is not the usual white Victorian woman but a woman with colonial affiliations. As a woman born and bred in India, she occupies an ambivalent position as she herself is somewhat of an outsider to England. Though she did belong to one of the prominent colonial families in Calcutta, and later immigrated to England, her colonial links still would have made her assimilation to Victorian society somewhat difficult.[61]

Hence, she occupies an elusive space, having inhabited both Anglo-India as well as Victorian England, and not belonging completely to either world. This is further intensified through her ambiguous racial identity. Amanda Hopkinson makes an interesting remark, that Cameron "remained all her life devoted to the Indian subcontinent although her olive complexion and dark hair need not denote the mixed blood that has been sometimes ascribed to her"(34). Victoria Olsen in fact traces "a high caste Bengali" woman in Cameron's mother's lineage, which explains Cameron's olive skin. Olsen argues that while this "mixed racial heritage may have been perfectly acceptable in eighteenth-century Pondicherry", "it may have not been quite the thing in nineteenth-century Calcutta"(14). Olsen also adds that "gossip did circulate about the family's mixed heritage: even as late as the 1840's an English visitor to Calcutta snickered about Pattle being a variation of 'Patel,' a common Indian surname"(14).[62]

Such a hybrid racial identity certainly assigns Cameron a unique position. The

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[61] Cameron comes from a renowned family in colonial India. Her father, James Pattle, was a high ranking employee of the British East India company while her mother, Adeline de l'Etang who comes from a long established French noble family. For more on her lineage, see Victoria Olsen.

[62] Patel is an Indian surname.

lack of a unified subject position presents her with a distinctive gaze. She is not the "pure" white woman in the colony, although her superior position to her photographic subject (the native) in terms of race certainly assigns her a colonial gaze. As a white woman in the colonies, she has limited access to the native body because of her gendered status.[63] Yet she is not the typical white woman in the colonies, but a photographer who has had twelve years of photographic fame behind her. Further she cannot be relegated to the category of the usual white woman traveler/photographer in the colonies, as she herself is no stranger to the Indian subcontinent or to Indian lineage. In fact, her Anglo-Indian origins open up the issue of companionship and agreement between the photographer and her Ceylonese model, which further complicates her gaze. This predicament where Cameron is denied footing to access any gaze with conviction situates her in a peculiar position, further complicating the inherent contradictions in imperial femininity, as pointed out by Simon Gikandi.[64] The result is a complex vision which has the potential to destabilize conventional notions of a stereotypical colonial male gaze.

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[63] For theorisings about a female orientalist gaze, see Reina Lewis' discussion on Henriette Browne's paintings of the harem in Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation. Lewis notes how Browne's view of the orient as domestic and respectable challenges the orientalist sexual fantasy and reveals the gendered nature of the colonial gaze. Lewis argues that while it is easy to ascertain that her gendered status allows her a different positionality from which to highlight certain types of representation, it is difficult to discern if it also grants her a different viewing position, in the form of a female gaze. She notes that one cannot assume that since Browne was a female, she could empathize with the situation abroad. What is possible is that "given the moral implications of subject matter, the socializing act of painting for a woman in Browne's position foregrounded a positionality in relation to the harem that was necessarily less damning and eroticized than that of her male counterparts"(162). Therefore the position from which she paints as a woman artist attributes such a perspective, and the harem becomes a respectable enough space "to contain the respectable lady artist persona associated with Browne"(162).

[64] Simon Gikandi draws attention to the contradictory position confronting women in the culture of colonialism who saw the imperial enterprise as a space where they could design new modes of subjectivity. He notes the "complicity/resistance"(123) dialectic in which these women fashioned themselves, and asks: "Do we praise them for rising beyond domestic confinement and finding new opportunities in the colonial frontier, or do we condemn them for failing to transcend (male) ideologies of empire, including those of racial and caste superiority?#"(122). Gikandi suggests that imperial femininity should be seen as an invitation to read colonialism's culture in its contradictions and complicities, "as a chiasmus in which the

The complexity of Cameron's position is well enacted in her photograph of *A Group of Kalutara Peasants* which features three Sinhalese villagers (fig. 7).

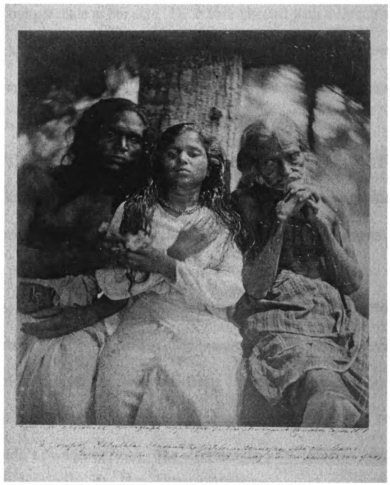

Fig.7. Cameron, Julia Margaret. A Group of Kalutara Peasants. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Royal Photographic Society Collection at the National Media Museum.

polarities that define domination and subordination shift with localities, genders, cultures, and even periods"(124).

There is more here than a woman and two men grouped together. The young woman, flanked by two men on either side, is in regular dress, in a jacket and cloth, and has her longish hair falling down to her shoulders. She is not elaborately dressed, only a strand of pearls visible on her neck. She crosses her arms against her chest, and one arm reaches out to the younger male at her side. He is bare-chested with a sarong around his hips, and stares back at the camera, along with the woman. The older man towards her right leans against the tree trunk, and tilts his head sideways a little, staring at a point at an angle, placing his chin against his hands.

I argue that Cameron, through her representation, reveals the mediated nature of photography, drawing attention to the fabricated and constructed apparatus, the photograph, registering ambivalence about the nature of colonial photography. The photograph creates powerful alternative fictions of native female sexuality by making a very mockery of the realism behind the fictional couple. It attempts to construct an imaginary conjuration of a fictional family. The female model is barely an adolescent, not quite fitting into the category of a woman. Hints of primitive sexuality circulate when the female model embroiled in a courtship scene is in fact only twelve years of age, according to Cameron's own inscription. She inscribes the photograph as "the girl being twelve years of age and the old man saying he is her father and stating himself to be one hundred years of age"(Cox, 493). The younger male, as we can speculate, is constructed as her lover, suggested through their close proximity and near-romantic pose in a somewhat gender segregated nineteenth century Sinhalese peasant society.

In ethnographic photographs, couples are compelling subjects. Malek Alloula argues that "[a]s the constitutive unit of society, the couple cannot be photographically

avoided"(37). Ceylonese colonial photographs did favor prints of couples, of various ethnic groups in their distinct dresses. But while Alloula argues that the representations of Algerian couples are a product of fantasy and not a reflected reality, Cameron's representation is hardly straightforward.[65] It is deliberately left ambiguous, whether the man and woman do constitute a couple if at all.[66]

The move towards improbability results in a sense of fracture which dominates this image. This is made distinct by the couple's pose which is very artificial and unnatural. Very reminiscent of one of Cameron's tableaux vivant, the scene is almost theatrical, having the group pose in a rather dramatic fashion.[67] They do not stand in a natural pose, especially the woman. She crosses her arms and extends one hand towards the younger man in a heightened fashion, revealing the artificial nature of their positioning as well as the representation as a whole. The man and woman hold hands and flowers, and he leans his face towards her while the older man maintains his distance, slightly away from the pair.

The photograph begins to disintegrate when the half child/woman is disassociated from the scene, the lack of engagement clear from her eyes. Though she holds hands

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[65] Malek Alloula argues that "the very idea of the couple is an imported one which is applied to a society that operates on the basis of formations that are greater than simple twoness, such as the extended family, the clan, or the tribe. The couple, in the Western sense, is an aberration, a historical error, an unthinkable possibility in Algerian society" (38). Alloula tells us, in fact, that the photographs serve as evidence of "one of the chief objectives of colonization, namely the breakup of the very kernel of the resistance to colonial penetration: the traditional family"(39).

[66] See Joanne Lukitch's "'Simply Pictures of Peasants'" for an extended discussion on the ambiguity of the courtship scene in this photograph.

[67] Victoria Olsen argues that theatricality is empowering for Cameron in the context of her English photographs. Olsen suggests that "theatricality entailed self consciously playing roles of all kinds, including femininity, maternity, class affiliations, and "character" arts like those of artist and eccentric"(161). Therefore she points out that "in a society where public roles were relatively fixed and inflexible, the world of theatre and fantasy allowed room to explore other selves and identities"(161).

with the younger man and carries flowers in her hands, she is posed in a self conscious and strained fashion. She seems rigid and uncomfortable, arrested by the camera, with her right arm suspended in air. Due to her pose, her consent in this "courtship" can only be in question. Her lips strained at the edges suggest a sense of disengagement, and aloofness, indifference rather than compliance. Any semblance of motion is eliminated when she is frozen and fixed. Although the lighting illuminates the woman's body, constructing her as the focal point of the image, the female model is put into a position of bodily constraint when she is framed by the two men. In fact Cameron enacts the violence of colonial representation on the native female body when the couple, especially the woman, seem coerced into a courtly scene.

Further this coupled unit is not triangulated with perhaps child (or children) but with an older male who Cameron herself claims to be the father of the woman. Cameron in fact labels the print as representative of a woman and her father, acknowledging the familial instead of the courtly relationship acted out in the photograph. The incongruous conjunction of the father and child in such a conjugal setting is certainly very awkward. While the young man and woman attempt to construct a tight knit visual space within the image, their hands and heads reaching out, the older man stands slightly away interrupting the composition. The partition of space between the couple and the man produce disjunction into the image. The perfection and the credibility of the illusion of a family break down. The fictitious nature of the image comes to the fore when Cameron inserts the older man into the frame.

The uneasy and ambiguous relationship between the models and the viewers is significant. First the gazes that the subjects do hold are significant as they provide one

angle into the image. The viewers cannot easily absorb the image as the woman and younger man both boldly look back at the camera and confront them. They hold the attention of the viewers by their expression. They gaze back quizzically almost interrogating and challenging the spectator. Their gazes hint at a sense of insubordination. The viewers are dispossessed of their own gaze when they become the objects to be seen.[68]

While the fore-grounded dominant subject of this photograph is certainly the younger man on the left with his blazing, penetrating expression, his eyes challengingly meeting the viewers, sidelining both the female and the older male, what is critical is the third figure, the older man, who constructs an alternative angle to approach the image. While the presence of the father introduces disjunction into the image of the lovers, enacting the breakdown of the representation itself, it is his gaze which is decisive. It is in fact hard to discern his look. He seemingly constructs an image of the acquiescent subject, submissive to the intentions of the photographer. Yet his gaze cuts across the visual plane of the viewers, who are more inclined to gaze at the couple because of the visual incentive of an amorous pose. The older man's direction of the look interrupts the vantage point of the viewers and redirects their gaze towards his own look.

At this point, it is necessary to elaborate on the older man's gaze. While the young couple stares back at the camera, the older man holds a meditative gaze. His gaze seems melancholic and reflective. It is a gaze which does not signal either resistance or acquiescence. This places the viewers in an uncomfortable position, left with a sense of

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[68] Such dynamics are somewhat related to James Elkins's observation of the dialogical relationship between the observer and object in The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing. He states, "Ultimately, seeing alters the thing that is seen and transforms the seer"(11).

frustration as to how they can position themselves in relation to the object. In fact the reflective gaze is disruptive when the viewers become embroiled in the older man's impenetrable and vacant stare, shattering the illusion of transparency critical to the colonial gaze. The result is a sense of fracture that the photograph conveys, resisting absorption into the specular economy of a patriarchal and orientalist vision. Hence an ambivalent gaze comes into being where Cameron seemingly wields a stereotypical colonial gaze but only to immediately undercut it.

Conclusion

While colonial photographers focused on scenes which reinforced notions of exoticism and difference, Cameron is strangely "out of focus", not in the sense that Victorian society labels her but in the manner that questions the assumptions behind those colonial stereotypes.[69] While the first three local prints demonstrate the way Cameron manipulates the photograph to grant agency to the native model, however fraught, the group portrait reveals how Cameron introduces an interesting counter-realism to her Ceylonese oeuvre by disrupting notions of the supposed truth behind consumer-driven images of the colonized female body. Her Ceylonese images of women become less a site for a debates about the ambivalence of colonial photography and more a location where Cameron can enact the complexities of the construction of a colonial photograph. Her prints allow no easy categorization when we are left with a lack of a viewing situation which can provide a sense of coherence. She introduces multiple

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[69] Cameron's English prints were often criticized as strangely "out of focus". This refers to Cameron's photographic technique where she photographed from close range which made her prints barely in focus and somewhat blurred. Cox and Ford describe this method as "more suggestive than descriptive in nature"(48).

viewing positions which produce varied narratives, orchestrating the Ceylonese photographs to disjunctive ends.

Chapter II

A Something Male in Petticoats! The Problematic Representation of Sinhalese Men in Nineteenth Century Colonial Ceylon

Introduction: Neither Female nor Male

In *Eight Years' Wanderings in Ceylon* (1855), a bemused Samuel W. Baker, an English explorer who travels to Ceylon, makes an intriguing statement about the Sinhalese. Soon after landing in Ceylon, Baker concludes that Ceylon is "a series of disappointments"(4). He remarks:

> You see a native woman clad in snow white petticoats, a beautiful tortoiseshell comb fastened in her raven hair; you pass her--you look back--wonderful! She has a beard! Deluded,--a something male in petticoats; a petty thief, a treacherous, cowardly villain, who would perpetrate the greatest rascality had he only the pluck to dare it. In Stranger, this is only another disappointment; it is a Cingalese Appo---a man--no, not a man fact, in this petticoated wretch you see a type of the nation of Cingalese. (5)[70]

Baker discovers that the individual whom he initially perceives as female is in fact male, and that the male is only something partly akin to what he comprehends as an actual male. The image shifts from an unambiguous female to an ambiguous male, complicating a binary mode of gender identification. The woman, whose raven hair and delicate figure requires that he look twice back at her, is only a man and not quite.

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[70] The "petticoat" refers to a white or colored cloth called the "comboy" which is draped around the lower part of the body, which was usually worn by Southern males, known as the low-country Sinhalese. These men would usually wear a comb which would fix the hair tied up in a bun *(konde)*. For more on the politics of clothing in Ceylon, see Nira Wickramasinghe.

Confusion results when Baker's status as the male observer is in jeopardy. The fluidity of gendered categories is threatening for Baker, when his gendered positioning as the male traveler is put to crisis upon his arrival in Ceylon. He is unable to eroticise the object at hand with relish. His gaze is immediately deflected by revulsion which accompanies the misrecognition. His disappointment at finding that the supposed object of his admiration was after all an ambiguous male leads to disgust. The indescribable male is predictably chastised for such ambiguity when Baker criminalizes him, constructing him as deceitful and corrupt.

The disillusionment emerges not only because of the perceived ambiguity of the Sinhalese but also because of Baker's realization that orientalist depictions of women, saturated in western fantasy, are fictitious. Instead of exotic, imaginative fictions, the Sinhalese women seem devoid of such romanticism, and are placed in the social reality of Ceylon.[71] Elizabeth Harris points out that "[I]n several of the male observers there is disappointment that the living reality of the Sri Lankan woman did not match up to the romanticized image they had brought with them"(19). Harris argues that men being mistaken for women and women being indistinguishable as women, suggest that "disorientation results when sexual roles appear to be reversed or confused, and woman as a sexual object cannot be clearly distinguished for exploitation from her male counterparts"(15).

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[71] The Sinhalese woman poses an unusual problem to the British traveler of Ceylon. Though at times she is described in picturesque terms, often times she is represented as ambiguous. She is described as a withered old hag, and as William Knighton observes, she is unbecomingly attired. He remarks, "As for the woman, I do not believe it would be possible for female humanity to dress itself more unbecomingly than the majority of the Singhalese do" (39). He states that no attempt whatever was being made "to fit to the shape, or to confine it at the waist, a piece of cloth wrapped around the lower part of the person, resembling scanty petticoats, and similar to what the men wear" (38).

Ceylon ceases to be a fabled paradise upon Baker's arrival. Orientalist depictions of colonies were often more fiction than fact, where fabricated oriental scenes became the only source of information on the scenes depicted.[72] Likewise Baker only encounters a somewhat jaded and lifeless environment instead of the bustling exoticism he envisions in Ceylon. While Baker is disenchanted, the romance of the island spoilt, his frustration is further intensified through the external appearance of the Sinhalese.

But it is the intersection between discourses of nation and gender which is most intriguing. Baker's observation that "in this petticoated wretch you see a type of the nation of Cingalese" is significant. The ambiguously gendered male is constructed as emblematic of the nation. It is not only the male who is implicated in being unable to lay claim to a masculinity that the English can comprehend, but also the nation. The colonized male body is a metaphor for Ceylonese nationhood. The nation, just like the male, is sapped within by the lack of imperial masculinity, and straddles between the male and the female, indefinable and uncontainable. As the Sinhalese male cannot acquire the English model of manhood, he is thus castrated.

In particular, Baker's indictment of Sinhalese men as unmanly is associated with Ceylon being incapable of self-rule, as masculine valor is often equated with political

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[72] Anne McClintock notes that "Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination-a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears"(22). Laura Ann Stoler, in Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule, notes that the tropics had always remained "a site for European pornographic fantasies long before conquest was under way, with lurid descriptions of sexual license, promiscuity, gynecological aberrations and general perversion"(43). Jill L. Matus points out that even if sexual instabilities are seemingly threatening for Victorian society at large, "theories of sexual fluidity were especially useful in formulating ideas about differences among women of different classes and cultures"(21). Matus suggests that such discourses about sexual slippage and ambiguity were "most ideologically useful in Victorian enterprises of 'othering'-the construction, particularly, of other classes, races and nationalities" (48). It is most likely then that such "abnormalities" which have the potential to disrupt the binary system of sexual difference are located usually in the colonies. Ceylon is constructed as such a site of sexual aberration and anomaly through the constructions of gender ambiguity.

rule. Therefore these discourses of gender ambiguity serve a dual function. On the one hand, they attempt to assert Baker's fantasies of aggressive masculinity, through an aversion to a subverted Sinhalese manhood. On the other, it helps Baker neutralize a Sinhalese racial and political identity, by negating the potential menace Ceylon poses to the British. Yet the ambiguity or the unresolved wavering between male and female creates anxiety about fixing any gendered identity on to the Sinhalese male in order to construct an asymmetrical power relationship between the British and the Sinhalese. I contend that the "deviant" Sinhalese male body representative of the nation itself is not an image of fragility but a symbol of slippery racial, political and gendered identities.

Homi Bhabha points to liminal or in-between spaces and subject positions as key sites in the contestation of dominant hegemonies. A critical component of these spaces is ambivalence, an ambivalence that surfaces when the dominant cannot enforce cultural and political authority. Ambivalence enables resistance through performative mimicry when "the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double"(86). Such ambiguity over colonial relations which destabilizes colonial subjectivity is applicable to the Ceylonese context. The ambiguously gendered male creates a split in the official discourses of empire when he cannot be relegated to a clearly defined category, complicating the process of identification of the colonizers in Ceylon. I contend that this reveals a more complex anxiety about colonial control and cultural dislocation, concerns to which I will return in my conclusion to the chapter.

This explains Baker's anxiety about the imperceptibility of the Sinhalese as well as Ceylon itself. In fact, Baker himself engaged in a highly "masculine" form of recreation, where big-game hunting was considered a display of colonial manhood and

courage. He recounts how a spirit of wandering lured him to Ceylon with its attraction of sports, especially hunting, and his narrative is primarily focused on his hunting exploits, especially on his numerous elephant shooting expeditions. Yet his concern that the island's resources have not been utilized by the colonial government is evident. He presents his text within the larger context of his political, professional and literary careers. He speaks as an English resident, not just a writer and an adventurer. Hence, Baker, in his preface to the travelogue, comments that his intention is to sketch a picture of Ceylon "in order to prove the possibility of improvement for the future"(x). Thus the personal and the political clearly converge in the text.

But the fact that Baker must construct the Sinhalese male as deceitful as well lacking in virility is significant. He is unable to neutralize the threatening effects of the ambiguously gendered male by undermining his "masculinity" alone. The ambivalent male symbolic of the nation is also "a petty thief, a treacherous, cowardly villain, who would perpetrate the greatest rascality had he only the pluck to dare it" (5). Identifying the Sinhalese with deceit and using stereotypical vocabulary common in colonial writings about the colonized cultures, Baker suggests that Ceylon itself is unreliable, racially unfit. It also suggests Baker's need to identify and locate Sinhalese men in terms of at least a stable racial identity, if not a gendered one. He reinforces his outrage at the people and thus legitimizes the construction of the Sinhalese male as an enigma of race and gender.

While Baker's observation reveals his struggles with notions of varied masculinities in Ceylon and the complex relationship with the broader ambiguities which construct Ceylon, it is this notion of ambiguity on which I wish to focus in this chapter. A predominant issue in nineteenth-century travel writing on Ceylon is the British

construction of gender ambiguity of the Sinhalese. Most male and female travelers are faced with an unusual dilemma when they are confronted with ambiguously gendered bodies upon their entry into colonial Ceylon. For instance, Edward Sullivan, in *The Bungalow and the Tent; or a Visit to Ceylon* (1854), notes how he is "beset by a nondescript and anomalous crowd, attired in scanty petticoats, reaching to the ankles, parasols in their hands, and their long hair drawn off the forehead, and turned up behind with a high tortoiseshell comb"(18). While "natives" are of course interchangeable and inexhaustible, he writes,

> These peculiarities of dress, together with their full busts and effeminate features, and the waddling gait caused by the restraint of the petticoats, impress the traveler with the idea that he has landed amongst a nation of women; but when assured of their masculine gender, the similarity amongst them all is so great that he immediately jumps to the conclusion that, on the other hand, there are no women at all. (19)

Sullivan is certainly repulsed by such erasure of difference, and notes that "one is continually confounded and disgusted by the appearance of creatures from the age of ten to fifteen, whom, but for the certain knowledge that they were men, one would certainly conclude to be women"(19). Hence, Sinhalese men and women collapse in terms of their physicality in a precarious fashion, revealing a crisis in categorical definitions.[73] Male

[73] There are many nineteenth-century travel narratives which depict how sexual ambiguity encountered in Ceylon presents an uncomfortable prospect for most travelers. S Langdon describes the father of a female child to whom he hopes to give a Christian education, and how he "was dressed in a skirt fastened round the waist, like his daughter"(17) and adds that "if you had not been told, you might have judged from his dress and appearance that he was a woman; for he not only wore his hair in a chignon, but he also wore, as nearly all Singhalese men do, a tortoise-shell comb round the top of his head"(17). W.S. Caine describes how the men "wear a sheet of brightly coloured calico twisted round the hips, and reaching to the feet like a petticoat"(580), and states that "the Cingalese women and men dress very much alike, and it is often difficult to tell which is which "(580). John Ferguson notes "the effeminate light brown Sinhalese, the men

and female bodies turn into sites at which the crisscrossing of gender categories and domains of power takes place. Gendered categories become fluid and contentious.

Sullivan's sentiments also suggest his frustrations in relation to a deferred heterosexual desire in the colonies. This is evident in his observations about the Sinhalese women, who evince only displeasure. Sullivan, in his quest for beautiful women in Kandy, remarks, "I must confess, the reality woefully disappointed me; neither features nor figures are pleasing, the former being coarse and vulgar, the latter very plump and inelegant" (83). He adds that the "wriggling gait is made doubly ridiculous by the excessive tightness of their comboys or petticoats, which confine the free movement of their hips almost as completely as tight straps"(83).[74] Sullivan also notes their "beastly and universal habit of chewing betel" (84) which hamper his desire for the women. He declares that even if Venus, herself, were "to appear with betel-stained lips, I really doubt whether the most impassioned of her admirers would not experience some slight disgust"(85). Hence Ceylon is a precarious site for Sullivan when the exotic is not erotic.

The crisis in Ceylonese representations is not that the colonized male is constructed as effeminate, which is after all frequent in colonial historiography of the classification of "natives". These constructions feminize both the colonies and the colonized men, and in turn exoticise and eroticise women, in order to demonstrate the phallic potential of male colonists who are asked to inscribe British authority on colonized territory. For instance, Mrinalini Sinha relates the colonial construction of the

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as well as women wearing their hair tied behind in knots (the former patronizing combs, the latter elaborate hair pins)"(107).

[74] The low-country Sinhalese women would generally wear a shorter jacket and a comboy while Kandyan women would wear the *osari,* where the cloth is draped around the upper and lower body.

figures of the "manly Englishman" and the "effeminate Bengali *babu*" in nineteenth-century India, to purposes of political, economic, and administrative imperatives that underpinned the strategies of colonial rule in the late nineteenth century.[75] Krishnaswamy refers to effeminism as "a racialized pathologization of 'femininity-in-masculinity'"(6). Yet in Ceylon, the Sinhalese male cannot be first identified as male in order to emasculate him as effeminate.

Ceylon's positionality itself further complicates the gender dynamics that the traveler is confronted with. It is critical to consider its situation as an island. Catherine Addison notes:

> Islands in literature, mythology, and dream are already feminized spaces, perhaps reminding their regressive questers of the fluid-surrounded child in the womb . . . As an object of male desire, the island resembles the secluded garden, but unlike the garden its enclosure is no mere wall or hedge but the most suggestive of all material things, the sea. Thus, it usually has as its concomitant the narrative of the voyage, whose direction, always *away from home* (and then back), posits the island on the extreme verge of the imaginative vision, points to it from "here" as "over there" and invests it with the elusive attraction of Otherness. (687-88)

As such a bounded and feminized space, Ceylon is a pivotal site for the articulation of colonial desire for travelers such as Baker and Sullivan. Yet the positioning of the British travelers is already fraught when "home" or England is also an island, and the travelers

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[75] According to Mrinalini Sinha, these categories "were produced by, and helped to shape, the shifts in the political economy of colonialism in the late nineteenth century: the changing imperatives in the strategies of colonial rule as well as the altered conditions for the indigenous elite's collaboration with colonial rule" (p. 3).

are unable to situate Ceylon exclusively as a site of "otherness", reinforcing a fundamental opposition between England and Ceylon. Romantic visions of Ceylon are further complicated when it is the ambiguous male body which is foregrounded against the land. It makes these travelers' often simplistic identification with colonized land as feminine and an object of male possession questionable, when their narratives are unable to pin down the obscure Sinhalese.[76]

Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub observe that one of the purposes of sex/gender systems is to "delimit and contain the threatening absence of boundaries between human bodies and among bodily acts that would otherwise explode the organizational and institutional structures of social ideologies"(2). They note that "sex/gender systems are always unstable sociocultural constructions" as "distinctions between male and female bodies are mapped by cultural politics onto an only apparently clear biological foundation"(2). Therefore they argue that "ambiguous gender identities and erotic practices such as those manifested in transvestism, transsexualism, and intertextuality offer a point at which social pressure might be applied to effect a revaluation of binary thinking"(4).

According to Jacques Lacan, the establishment of gender difference is the condition of the formation of the subject. He observes that in the passage from nature to culture, the subject acquires a social and speaking position only by confronting the question of castration and sexual difference perceived in relation to the presence and absence of the male sexual organ-the Oedipus complex.[77] He notes that this process of

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[76] See Anne McClintock for a discussion of the feminization of colonial landscapes.

[77] See Jacques Lacan's "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function" in Ecrits: A Selection, pp. 3-9.

"maturation is henceforth dependent in man on cultural intervention, as is exemplified by the fact that sexual object choice is dependent upon the Oedipus complex"(7). In order to become a subject, the subject must assume a sexualized position within the social order. Yet the ambiguous Sinhalese male creates a rupture in this signification process, and is a figure of abjection.[78] Kristeva describes the abject in *Powers of Horror* as that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite"(4). Since it does not respect boundaries, the abject threatens identity in individuals and nations and requires expulsion. But according to Kristeva, the abject can never be obliterated and hovers at the borders on one's own identity, which is simultaneously fascinating and terrifying, a threat to the construction of a stable identity.

Hence, as the Kristevan Other, the Sinhalese male body as the location of disruption, is thus an unstable signifier, exposing contradictions inherent in dominant ideologies of gender, race and sexuality in Ceylon. He remains a focal point of curiosity to many Victorian observers. Most travel narratives of Ceylon focus on the Sinhalese men, who, rather than the women, emerges as objects of interest. The Sinhalese woman poses a threat in that she too cannot be easily identified as female, but she is an acceptable oddity; the effect is not that threatening as evident in the narratives. But by contrast, the Sinhalese men remain a visible threat, unassimilated into discourses of effeminacy, providing a disturbing image of rupture and slippage in gender discourses.

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[78] Homi Bhabha too argues: "to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its locus, its look....; the very place of identification is a place of splitting...; identification is never the affirmation of a pregiven identity -- it is always the transformation of the subject in assuming that identity" (Location of Culture, 44-45). Such a process of identification is fraught without clearly defined gendered Other(s) in Ceylon.

In this chapter, drawing upon several nineteenth-century literary and visual representations by British male and female travelers such as Edward Carpenter, Mrs. Arthur Thompson, and Julia Margaret Cameron, I explore the gendered dynamics of Ceylon in the nineteenth century with emphasis on the representations of Sinhalese masculinity, especially its ideological importance. Anne McClintock warns that, "sexuality comes close . . . to being no more than a metaphor for other, more important (that is, male) dynamics"(14). Ann Laura Stoler similarly cautions against conventional views of imperialism, where "sexual images illustrate the iconography of rule, not its pragmatics.": "Sexual asymmetries and visions convey what is 'really' going on elsewhere, at another political epicenter. They are tropes to depict other centers of power. . . Sexual domination has been carefully considered as a discursive symbol, instrumental in the conveyance of other meanings, but has less often been treated as the substance of imperial policy." Instead Stoler insists that "sexual control was more than a convenient metaphor for colonial domination" (54).[79]

I will reveal how the Sinhalese male, while frustrating travelers such as Samuel Baker and Edward Sullivan, facilitates a certain degree of homoerotic desire as well among some travelers.[80] Some of the accounts hint at a homoeroticism, which is masked as very often a general curiosity in the natives. Such a desire is also predictably displaced by these travelers when they resort to rhetoric of horror and revulsion about

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[79] See Ann Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race, and Morality in Colonial Asia," in Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era, ed. Micaela di Leonardo.

[80] See Ann Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race, and Morality in Colonial Asia," in Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era, ed. Micaela di Leonardo.

gender fluidity, and an uneasy narrative of conquest and adventure which help construct Ceylon as a space of danger which can be overcome by male prowess. Ceylonese travel narratives largely focus on the land as a game reserve, where male narrators often pit themselves against the dangers of nature, asserting an aggressive masculinity, retaining male dominance. It can be read as a strategy whereby an English masculine identity is recovered, where colonial men are imagined as active, masculinity deliberately re-enacted.

However, I am particularly interested in how the constructions of gender ambiguity in Ceylon produce a space of articulation for some female artists to imaginatively access the Sinhalese male body, allowing them to construct alternative sites/sights, where new forms of white female desire could be explored. I investigate how ambiguities of gender evoke pleasure and horror among Victorian female travelers in Ceylon. While men and women could find certain social and sexual freedoms within the colonies, I explore how many female travelers utilize the discourses of gender ambiguity in Ceylon to articulate novel forms of Victorian identity. I discuss how discourses of gender ambiguity provide some women travelers a space of contestation of the stereotypical notions of vulnerability of white women in the presence of native men in Ceylon. I analyze the work of Mrs. Arthur Thompson, and show that while the concept of white femininity in peril in the colonies was an imaginary fiction which functioned as a means to elide actual issues of race, gender and empire, Ceylon serves as a site to interrogate and contest these notions to an extent. I argue that within the ambiguous middle ground between male and female, British women in Ceylon such as Julia Margaret Cameron construct strategies to break away from dominant gender ideologies,

and question and displace the function of such dualisms in Victorian and colonialist societies.

Subversive Bodies: Homosexual Anxieties and Longings

In this context, I would like to begin my discussion with a brief analysis of Edward Sullivan's text, *The Bungalow and the Tent; or a Visit to Ceylon*, and focus on the homoerotic anxieties which surface in certain British constructions of the gender ambiguous Sinhalese male. Sullivan, echoing Samuel Baker, attempts to erase the ambiguity of Sinhalese men by reinforcing duality and gender difference in Ceylon in his narrative. For instance, he insists on employing a more masculine-like servant from Malabar, "not relishing the notion of being attended upon by a Cingalese of uncertain gender"(36).[81] Yet any sign of effeminacy even in the more "masculine"- like Malabar youth must be camouflaged. His long hair and feminine like cloth is hidden: "though he wore long hair, he concealed it with a turban, and though he *generally* wore a petticoat, he *occasionally* indulged in breeches"(36).

While Sullivan's need to scan the Malabar's body and to erase his ambiguity reflects his need to neutralize the man's threatening effects, and his fashioning of the Malabar's body is reflective of the obsession of colonial authorities with native bodies as a crucial site of power politics in empire, all these maneuvers reveal a repressed recognition of the subversive potential of the ambiguously gendered Sinhalese body over which Sullivan has only limited control. His insistence on the erasure of ambiguity and

[81] Malabar refers to the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the second largest ethnic community of Sri Lanka who are mostly of Hindu origin. In most colonial accounts, the Tamils are referred to as more masculine-like than their Sinhalese counterparts.

revulsion about the indeterminacy of sex conceals his anxiety about a homoeroticism available in Ceylon, a homoeroticism that is continuously masked.[82] Sullivan attempts to inoculate homoerotic tensions when he insists on a Victorian model of masculinity.

Homoeroticism seeps into the text when Sullivan recounts an episode where the male servant admires the horse keeper Sullivan has employed to look after his horse. The Malabar servant tells Sullivan "most confidentially" that his horse-keeper was "a stunner," "though in what particular sense he did not explain"(37). Somewhat sexually suggestive, this incident relates the Malabar servant's possible attraction to the horse-keeper. Yet Sullivan quickly reassures the reader that the Ceylonese was "an excellent servant" (37) and that he "parted with him, without having detected any *sin of a deadly nature* in him"(37) [my emphasis]. While it could be inferred that sins "of a deadly nature" are homoerotic desires, Sullivan dispels such fears, by constructing him as an ideal servant, validating and exonerating the domesticated Malabar youth.

Sullivan's attempt to neutralize homoerotic tensions by incorporating the youth into discourses of domesticity, is exemplified well in Edward Carpenter's text, *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta* (1890), another representation of Ceylon, although Carpenter's text does not explicitly emphasize the gender ambiguity in Ceylon.[83] An interest in mysticism brings Carpenter, (1844-1922) a renowned British socialist, author,

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[82] Although homosexuality is unspeakable, accounts of homosexuality in Ceylon abound. Ceylon was in fact rampant with male prostitution, as Ronald Hyam elaborates. Discussing sexual opportunities during empire, Hyam notes that "local girls would offer themselves; *or boys, especially in Ceylon*" (88) [my emphasis]. In fact, the incidence of venereal disease in the colonies, according to Hyam, was 184 per thousand, and "Colombo provided the League with its best proof of boy-prostitution (involving Tamil teenagers working in the docks)" (148).

[83] Edward Carpenter notices the "delicacy" of the Sinhalese male. He notes that "[t]heir large eyes and tortoise-shell combs and long hair give them a very womanly aspect; and many of the boys and youths have very girlish features and expressions" (17).

poet, pamphleteer and activist, to India and Ceylon, and he narrates his impressions of Ceylon in the form of a travel diary. While he predominantly describes his visit to see the Gnani, the Hindu ascetic and teacher with whom he discusses philosophy and eastern religion, his travel narrative also discusses various other aspects such as Ceylon's geography, customs and its peoples.

Although Carpenter courageously acknowledged his own homosexuality in Victorian society and discussed the subject in his 1908 text, *The Intermediate Sex,* homosexuality is a fraught subject in his Ceylonese text.[84] It is certainly veiled and when it surfaces, it does so subtly. He can only obliquely allude to such homosexual impulses, revealing the tensions this creates for individuals such as Carpenter. Laura Ann Stoler, with reference to the East Indies, notes that the

> absent presence of the dangers of homosexuality ...is striking. What is more, in the Dutch archives, the threat of homosexual desire among stolid Dutch agents of empire, of the colonial *middenstand,* is rarely if ever mentioned. When homosexuality is breached, it is always in the form of a *deflected* discourse, one about sodomitical Chinese plantation coolies, about degenerate subaltern European soldiers, never about respectable Dutch men".(*Race and the Education of Desire* 129)

As a renowned English figure, Carpenter perhaps cannot trespass sexual borders in Ceylon easily due to his positioning in the colonial English hierarchy. As a representative of Victorian respectability, he can only hint at homosexual relations in

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[84] For a comprehensive analysis of Carpenter's travels to Ceylon and the male friendships he makes, especially with Ponnambalam Arunachalam, see Robert Aldrich.

Ceylon where he persistently shifts from the homosocial to the homosexual.[85]

Carpenter makes several references to male homosocial bonding in the colonies. He describes the bachelors' household of Dr Devos shared with a Eurasian and a Sinhalese youth. Carpenter notes it as "a small easy-going bachelors' household, and all very chummy together"(91). Carpenter hints at sexual escapades of his friend, Ajax. Carpenter observes that "Ajax gets on well with the native youths and boys here; he has an easy, friendly way with them, and they get hold of his hand and walk alongside. Of course they are delighted to find any *Mahate* who will treat them a little friendly; but I fear the few English about are much shocked at our conduct" (34). Yet, Ajax is bound for the tea estates in Assam, India, from the moment he is introduced and is only present for a short while at the beginning of the text. Hence Carpenter locates and conveniently dispels such tendencies in the form of Ajax. Ajax later surfaces but only through extracts of letters addressed to the narrator, describing his various endeavors in Assam, India.

While colonial domestic arrangements were often exploitative, containing colonized men in the feminized realm of domestic employment are an effective way for some of these male travelers and residents to access the gender deviant male in such an environment. The male domestic was an obligatory part of every colonial household. By locating the Sinhalese men within the domestic sphere, the supposed domain of women, Carpenter attempts to erase them of ambiguity, and enforce femininity, to accommodate the male to colonial desires. Carpenter, referring to the femininity of the colonised native, claims, "I believe many of these Indian and Cinghalese races love to be servants

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[85] Carpenter is nevertheless drawn to the physical beauty of Tamil men. He notes how the Tamils, by the docks, "work by hundreds, with nothing on beyond a narrow band between the thighs, loading and unloading barges and ships-a study of the human figure"(14). He further elaborates that "[s]ome of them of course are thick and muscular, but mostly they excel in a kind of unconscious grace and fleetness of form

(under a tolerably good master); their feminine sensitive natures, often lacking in enterprise, rather seek the shelter of dependence"(54). He adds that they "make, in many instances and when well treated, wonderfully good servants, their tact and affectionateness riveting the bond"(54). Once again, a comment confirmed by Ajax himself in a letter sent to Carpenter about the coolies in India. Ajax notes how the Indian coolies "if you are ill, they tend you just like a woman"(82).

Hence it is acceptable for the British men to admire, appreciate, and access the colonized within the confines of domesticity. Incorporating them into the male sanctioned domestic sphere could validate such intercourse under the guise of domestic servitude. As the British and the Ceylonese subjects were polarized in Ceylon, domesticity conveniently allowed homo-social bonding. Carpenter observes that the English "will allow that the [Ceylonese] are not without merit-indeed, if one keeps them to it they will often speak quite warmly of the tenderness and affectionateness of servants who have nursed them through long illnesses, etc.-but the idea of associating with them on terms of equality and friendship is somehow unspeakable and not to be entertained"(34).

Critical of British insularity in Ceylon, Carpenter notices the socially segregated colonial society and the various divides between the official English and the "second class" English, the English and the Eurasians, and the English and the Singhalese and Tamil elite. He notes how a friend of his was cautioned against such interaction by a planter when he "had just shaken hands rather cordially with a native gentleman": "Ah! my boy, you won't do that when you've been here three years!'"(20). Carpenter remarks that "a perfect social amalgamation and the sweetness of brethren dwelling together in

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as of the bronze Mercury of Herculaneum of which they often remind me"(14).

unity are things still rather far distant in this otherwise lovely isle" (20).

But it is significant that Carpenter also notes the tensions in such a relationship. He warns that "it is a mistake to suppose they will do anything out of a sense of duty" and proclaims that "if there is no attachment, what is the meaning if duty?" (55). He comments that affection is necessary in establishing a good relationship between the master and his servant: " The native, in keeping with his weaker, more dependent nature, is cunning and lazy-his vices lie in that direction rather than in the western direction of brutal energy. If his attachment is not called out, he can make his master miserable in his own way. And he does so"(55).

Thus the colonized male is conveniently depicted as docile and willing to be dominated. While Sullivan is perturbed by the notion of a Sinhalese male as a potential servant, Carpenter welcomes the prospect perhaps because of his sexual orientation. For instance, Kalua is the ideal servant cum companion, Carpenter's Sinhalese guide with whom he travels across Ceylon. Homoerotic overtones underlie Carpenter's relationship with Kalua. Kalua is described as:

> remarkably well-made and active and powerful. He is about twenty-eight, with the soft giraffe-like eyes of the Cinghalese, and the gentle, somewhat diffident manner which they affect; his black hair is generally coiled in a knot behind his head, and with an ornamental belt sustaining his colored skirt, and a shawl thrown over his shoulder, he looks quite handsome.(27)

While a studio portrait of Kalua is inserted in the text, Carpenter goes on to describe his relationship with him. Kalua certainly adds to the exoticism of the east when Carpenter notes:

> Last night I spent at Kandy with Kalua and his brother in their little cabin. They were both very friendly, and I kept being reminded of Herman Melville and his Marquesas island experiences-so beautiful the scene, the moon rising about ten, woods and valleys all around-the primitive little hut.(57)

Kalua becomes a legitimate and permitted object of male colonial admiration and possession. Carpenter is drawn to his strength when he remarks, "his savage strength and insouciance are splendid"(74). It is Kalua who gives Carpenter his hand, and guides him up steeper hills, providing him able physical assistance. He becomes "attached" to Carpenter, at times stretching himself near Carpenter to sleep.

Yet it is also a transitory relationship when Carpenter quits Ceylon to travel to India, terminating any undesirable emotions in the colonies. Kalua, tamed and trained into domesticity is conveniently dismissed, erasing possible homosocial and homosexual anxiety. This also reveals a homoeroticism that is continuously displaced in the text. Carpenter's reluctance to openly confront these anxieties reveal his own ambivalent position vis-à-vis his own sexual identity in Ceylon, and the subversive potential of Ceylon as a site which complicates sex categories.

The tensions surrounding the gender ambiguous body for male travelers such as Sullivan and Carpenter are significant and can only be evaluated by juxtaposing their work against other non-English writers, whose approaches perhaps diverge due to their differential investment in the British Empire. Ernst Haekel's writing acts as a contrast to the work of Baker, Sullivan and Carpenter. A German ecologist, Haekel, in his preface in *A Visit to Ceylon* (1883), indicates that it is as a "student and lover of nature" (2) that

he embarks upon this journey into the tropical world, suggesting that a journey to the tropics should be a priority for the naturalist. Carrying with him sixteen trunks of luggage, he arrives in Ceylon in 1881, and is fascinated with the native flora and fauna. He expresses his "constant delight and wonder" at the island's "prodigal vegetation" and mourns the colonial administration's destruction of the "forest-primaeval." His main objective, as he states, is scientific, "the study, namely, of the multiform and, to a great extent, unknown creatures of the Indian seas" (149).

Haekel travels across the island taking in the various sounds and sights of Ceylon, and is not perplexed by the slender fragility of Sinhalese men. They are an object of admiration for the author, especially men of the Rodiya caste. He notes how mother nature has "not only endowed the poor rejected Rodiya with the precious gift of contentment and frugality, but bestowed on him the attractive grace of beauty of form and limb, and as he wears the smallest possible amount of raiment there is ample opportunity for seeing and admiring it"(202). While the beauty of the youth becomes visible and accessible, Haekel is quick to note that among the sexes, "the boys particularly are remarkable for a poetical beauty of expression in their fine Aryan features" (203).

In fact Haekel notes the scarcity of Sinhalese women and observes that they are often "married at ten or twelve, and are old women between twenty and thirty." He proclaims that "the fair sex is the rarest-rarest of all when it is fair" (237). Yet even when he does comment on the beauty of the female natives, they do not capture his attention in the same way the "merry, pretty, boys" do, worthy only of a few words of praise and

appreciation.[86] The "curiously feminine appearance" (75) of the Sinhalese male is not abhorrent. In fact, it provides Haekel classical allusions, especially in his descriptions of Gamameda, the servant assigned to assist him in Beligam, the site of his zoological quarters in southern Ceylon.

Gamameda becomes Haekel's "new body servant"(200), and as the old rest house keeper informs Haekel, Gamameda "was told off to my exclusive service, had nothing to do the live-long day but to obey my wishes, and was a good boy, sure to do his duty punctually"(200). Haekel describes "the keen eye, the neat hand, and the supple agility" (202) of the youth. Intimacy seeps into the text when Haekel notes removing a thorn from the youth's foot, and how Gamameda, being grateful, followed him "like a shadow and tried to read my wishes in my eyes"(201). The youth becomes a devoted presence in the author's life:

> Hardly was I out of bed in the morning when he was standing before me with a freshly opened cocoa-nut, out of which he poured and offered me a cool morning draught of the milk. At dinner he never took his eyes off me, and always knew beforehand what I should want. When I was at work, he cleaned my dissecting instruments and the lenses of the microscope. But Ganymede was never so happy when I took him out in the cocoa-nut grove, or on the sea-shore, to paint and collect, shoot and fish". (201)

Gamamede creates an impression in Haekel when he says that "[a]mong the many beautiful figures which move in the foreground of my memories of the paradise of Ceylon, Ganymede remains one of my dearest friends"(200). He says that Gamameda

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[86] Ernst Haekel makes several references to beautifully formed women, such as the headman's daughters, though these descriptions are nearly always eclipsed by those of the men Haekel meets and admires.

"developed a personal attachment and devotion to me which touched [him] deeply"(200). When Haekel leaves Beligam after six weeks, he notes that "hardest of all was the parting from my faithful Ganymede; the poor lad wept bitterly, and implored me to take him with me to Europe"(273). He is "almost obliged to use force to free [himself] from his embrace" when Gamameda "clung to [his] knees and declared that he would follow [Haekel] unhesitatingly wherever [he] might take him"(273). But it is not only the youth that regrets the parting. Haekel too expresses sorrow when leaving the inhabitants of Beligam, especially Gamameda when he notes, "I got into the carriage which was waiting, and as I waved a last farewell to my good brown friends, I almost felt as if I had been expelled from paradise"(273).

Homoerotic undertones in the relationship between Haekel and Gamameda are apparent. However, though Haekel openly marvels at Gamameda's body while Edward Carpenter is restrained in his admiration of his servant, Kalua, the mutual adoration between master and servant is disquieting even for Haekel, perhaps necessitating strategies of restraint. As such, Gamameda is cast in a predominantly classical sense. Haekel describes Gamameda upon first seeing him:

> I saw before me, with uplifted arms in an attitude of prayer, a beautiful naked, brown figure, which could be nothing else than the famous statue of the "youth adoring." How surprised I was when the graceful Bronze statue suddenly came to life, and dropping his arms fell on his knees, and after raising his black eyes imploringly to my face bowed his handsome face so low at my feet that his long black hair fell on the floor. (200)

At first, Haekel's description of the youth is ambivalent when Gamameda cannot be

clearly defined in terms of gender. In his youthful body, the boundaries between the masculine and the feminine dissolve. Although Haekel makes reference to the ambiguous native male body in *The Evolution of Man: A Popular Scientific Study* when he observes a lactating Sinhalese man during his stay in Ceylon, at Belligemnia in 1881, he does not directly address such ambiguity in his travel narrative on Ceylon.[87] Yet references to Gamameda's femininity abound, as he seems to shuttle between the feminine and masculine. At first sight, Haekel sees only a "brown figure" which is not gender coded but immediately he recognizes it as male when he likens the youth to the statue of the "youth adoring." Yet the male figure curiously takes on an aura of femininity when Haekel describes the youth's gestures. For instance, Haekel's choice of language in describing Gamameda is significant. Gamameda looks at Haekel "imploringly" and falls at his feet, "raising his eyes" at him while his long black tresses touch the floor constructing a picture that is gendered, coded as feminine as well as subaltern.

But it is the comparison of Gamameda to a classical statue which is critical. Haekel casts the man in a sculptural pose, falling at his feet. Evocative of the convergence of classical aesthetic discourse of beauty and eighteenth century homoerotic

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[87] While descriptions of lactating men in British travel accounts of colonial Ceylon are not prevalent enough to be indexed, Haekel, in vol. 1 of The Evolution of Man: A Popular Scientific Study, notes how he was introduced to a young Cinghalese "as a curious hermaphrodite, half-man and half-woman. His large breasts gave plenty of milk; he was employed as 'male nurse' to suckle a new-born infant whose mother had died at birth. ..As the Cinghalese are small of stature and of graceful build, and as the men often resemble the women in clothing (upper part of the body naked, female dress on the lower part) and the dressing of the hair (with comb), I first took the beardless youth to be a woman. The illusion was greater, as in this remarkable case gynecomatism was associated with *cryptorchism*—that is to say, the testicles had kept to their original place in the visceral cavity, and had not traveled in the normal way down into the scrotum"(228). Haekel follows this description with another example from Alexander von Humboldt, describing a man in a South American Forest who offers his own breasts to the new born as a result of the disease of his wife, and how the "continuous stimulus of the child's sucking movements had revived the activity of the mammary glands"(228).

discourse in German philosophers such as Johann Winckelmann, Haekel constructs Gamameda as a classical object of appreciation.[88] Reminiscent of Winckelmann's adoration of the absolute beauty of ancient classical works such as the *Apollo Belvedere*, Gamameda is at once idealized and eroticized as a physically beautiful male. Gamameda becomes an object of beauty as well as the cause of a sensual response in Haekel.[89]

After being told that the beautiful youth's name is Gamameda, Haekel notes that he "immediately thought of Ganymede, for the favourite of Jove himself could not have been more finely made, or have had limbs more beautifully proportioned and moulded" (200). Later, Haekel once again equates Gamameda and other men he encounters to classical figures:

> As the children of both sexes always go naked till they are eight or nine years old-at least in the villages-or wear the scantiest loin-cloth, they are perfect as accessory figures in the Eden-like scenery, and often it would be easy to fancy that a Greek statue had come to life. Plate IV. Of Ransonnet's book, the portrait of Siniapu, a lad of fourteen gives a good idea of the characteristic type. Gamameda exactly resembled this head, but that his features were even softer and more girlish, reminding me of

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[88] J. J. Winckelmann's original and innovative work on the history of ancient art caused a radical shift in the concept of good taste, and was the paradigm for German thinking concerning both sculpture and Classical antiquity.

[89] Alex Potts, in his introduction to the translation, quotes Winckelmann. For Winckelmann, the apprehension of beauty does not require a philosophical approach. When the pure beauty of an art work is at its height, it is immediate to the viewer. He insists that a "full aesthetic response to a beautiful work is contemplative as well as vividly immediate and is sustained in the aftermath of any initial overwhelming flood of sensations the work might provoke"(33). Winckelmann says, "The first sight of a beautiful statue is, to him who has feeling, like the first view of the open sea, wherein our gaze loses itself and becomes fixed, but after repeated contemplation, the soul becomes more still and the eye quieter and moves from the whole to the particular" (quoted in Potts, 33).

Mignon. (203)

While Robert Aldrich argues that such references to Ganymede, who was "Jove's lover as well as cup-bearer" (289) as well as Mignon are explicit homosexual allusions, I argue that such classical allusions also become a way of perceiving and containing the anxieties in this encounter with the native.[90] It is apparent that there is a clear threat of emotional attachment in Haekel towards the Sinhalese youth in this description, one which is moderated in the relationship between Carpenter and Kalua. Haekel is in awe and wonder at the sight before him. Although he casts Gamameda in the form of a statue, it is he who becomes immobile and frozen, fixated on the man before him. As Gamameda comes back to life, respectfully greeting him, he also makes the spectator, Haekel in this instance, inactive. The fact that Gamameda can take possession of Haekel in his mesmerized state of astonishment is intriguing.

Constructing Gamammeda as an aesthetic object in turn helps alleviate some of these anxieties. It accommodates and validates the temptation in Haekel occasioned by the man's beauty. Gamameda becomes an aesthetic repository of idealized native beauty, which creates a distance between Haekel and Gamameda. The classical allusions mediate the relationship between Haekel and Gamameda, and the classical gaze allows the reader to defuse the brazen sensuality embedded in this description of the Sinhalese.

Classicism not only facilitates Haekel to bypass the sensually charged encounter between him and the native, but also placates realities of colonialism. Haekel notes,

How much better might a sculptor here study the true beauty and

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[90] Robert Aldrich, adopting a biographical and historical approach, points out the special relationship between Haekel and the native and refers to the classical lenses Haekel adopts in seeing the native. He reads this against Haekel's own criticism of notions of culture at home.

> proportion of the human form among these naturally developed models, than in the life-schools of European academics, where some model, found with difficulty among the degenerate sons of civilization and forced into some unwonted attitude, is but a poor substitute for the genuine child of nature. (285)

As such the colonized are constructed as statues or objects that transcend the socio-economic and political conditions of colonial Ceylon. As children of nature, they are artistic achievements, immune to the ravages of colonization. Recalling the intimate relationship between aesthetic and political discourse, this not only veils the realities of subjugation but also de-eroticises the male body by casting the Sinhalese as a "child."

Thus Haekel's text is important in highlighting how he organizes his homoerotic experience. Though he openly wonders at his servant's body, he too is unable to escape the discourses which impinge upon the likes of Sullivan and Carpenter. While Carpenter and Sullivan show different articulations of homoerotic desires, and negotiate and contain their relations with the Sinhalese male, Haekel manages to somewhat escape these prescriptions perhaps because he is motivated by "scientific research", which sanctions deeper scrutiny of native bodies, though he too is restrained.[91]

Accessible Men: Constructing the Sinhalese Male as Menacing

If gender ambiguity is a marker of cultural differences in colonial narratives by men, it is also critical in unveiling female colonial expression in the work of British

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[91] Anne Maxwell, juxtaposing the supposed rational and objectivist gaze of the scientist against that of the tourist argues that the gaze of the tourist 'although no less self enclosed, was nevertheless more subjective because it incorporated emotion"(10).Yet as Maxwell notes, it "did not transform them [the tourists] politically"(88) as "tourism was only a temporary retreat from a bourgeois lifestyle"(88).

women writers and artists in nineteenth century Ceylon. While writers such as Carpenter reveal how their efforts to maintain colonial power relations by affirming gender differences react in unpredictable ways with their own erotic impulses, I argue that discourses of gender ambiguity open up possible sites of expression for Victorian women writers and artists.[92]

The rhetoric of gender ambiguity is certainly pervasive in British women's accounts of the native men. Constance Gordon Cumming describes a man's "long silky black hair" (118) and how it "got unfastened, and fell in rich masses over his shoulders"(118). M.E. Corbet states that the men are "very effeminate looking" as they "wear long hair rolled up into a bunch behind"(212). Helen C. Ford finds the Sinhalese man a humorous sight when she exclaims several times that "it is so funny to see them, the becombed men"(152) who "wear their long hair in knots at back of their head, and a round tortoise shell comb at the top"(132). The native dress-the sarong-is referred to as "petticoats" by Ford. At one point she remarks, "man at one station with kandi jacket and skirt and hair in a knob, and then on the top, a high chimney pot hat, such a funny sight" (146).

While all these accounts reveal the women's interest in and fascination with the long hair of Sinhalese men, the ambiguity is a means for these women to access the Sinhalese male.[93] For instance, Marianne North flippantly recounts how a "good old

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[92] Elizabeth Harris, while discussing the work of Constance Gordon Cumming and Lucinda Darby Griffith, observes that the women do notice that "the distinction between genders in Sri Lanka is externally minimal but this does not disturb their equilibrium" (17). Harris argues that such "perceptions do not threaten their own sexual identity" (17), a claim which I interrogate to argue that women have far more fraught relationships with such gender constructions in order to negotiate their identities in the colonies.

[93] The long hair of the Sinhalese men was perceived as threatening by the colonial government, which

Cingalese" who waited on her at the hotel wanted to accompany her all across the world seemingly because he liked her, and she imagines how such an incident might be received at home: "I wondered what 'Elizabeth' would have said to my bringing home a very languid old native, with a round comb on the top of his grey hair, which was fastened in a most feminine knot beneath it, and who wore a jacket and petticoat"(303). But North uses the ambiguity of the man not only to indicate the ludicrous nature of the incident, but to alleviate any possible anxiety behind such an act. The scene is transformed into a comic incident by North, thereby terminating any transgression associated with such a proposition.[94]

The possibility of interracial desire as a result of a boundary collapse is a threat to British officials, an anxious proposition for most colonial governments.[95] For instance, in late-nineteenth century India, white women were important in retaining any illusions of white superiority, and their presence and protection were repeatedly invoked to construct and retain racial lines.[96] Therefore a distance was overtly maintained between British

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paved the way for the 1906 colonial decree which declared that the Sinhalese volunteers could no longer wear the *konde*. For a detailed discussion, see Nira Wickramasinghe, 86-87.

[94] Reina Lewis has argued that women had difficulty considering the colonies as places of sexual adventure because of their surveillance by imperial authorities: "The romantic cult of the sublime...was not a mode of engagement that correlated to the axis of female experience. The romantic[s'] immersion in what they took to be the authentic experience of strange lands, ideally led to the loss of their contemporary Western identity in favour of a passionate over identification with the exotic other...For women, the loss of identity involved in a passionate experience of the sublime threatened the boundaries of the proper femininity essential for their reputation" (179).

[95] Anne McClintock points out that body boundaries were considered to be "dangerously permeable and demanding continual purification, so that sexuality, in particular women's sexuality, was cordoned off as the central transmitter of racial and hence cultural contagion"(47). Laura Ann Stoler, in Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule, observes that European women had to be "positioned as the bearers of a redefined colonial morality" necessitating rigorous measures of policing the white woman's sexualized body as a marker of "white male prestige"(55).

[96] McClintock makes an interesting argument when she suggests that, "in the urban metropolis, some of the formative ambiguities of gender and class were managed and policed by the discourses on race, so that

women and Indian men and such undercurrents would have certainly carried to Ceylon, India's neighboring colony. But in the instance of Ceylon, such demarcations along the lines of race and gender are often questioned. As North's brief observation indicates, the access to Sinhalese men by colonial women interrogates the erected distance between Sinhalese men and English women in late nineteenth-century Ceylon.

This is seen in Mrs. Arthur Thompson's travel narrative, *A Peep into Ceylon: A Book of Travel Written for Children* (1886), which demonstrates Thompson's vexed relation to such narratives of body boundaries. Her own defenselessness as a woman in Ceylon is ambivalent. Addressed to a young audience, which includes Thompson's own children, Thompson describes Ceylon as a space of enchantment and adventure for the traveler. She recounts various exploits including traveling across the island, glimpsing various parts of the country and even getting lost during certain expeditions.

Thompson continuously refers to the gender ambiguity that confronts her in Ceylon in the text. The Sinhalese men cannot be distinguished from the women due to their feminine attire and delicate structure. She finds the men "looking just like women, with their long black hair plaited up in a knot at the back of their heads, and fastened with a large tortoise shell comb, and wrapped in a few yards of white or bright colored cotton, which they fasten round their waist in some strange way so that it hangs like a very scanty, tight skirt to a little below the knees."(48)

There is even an instance when she recounts a scene where she confuses a man

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the iconography of imperialism entered white middle- and upper-middle class with fundamental, if contradictory, force"(77). She adds, "by the turn of the century, sexual purity emerged as a controlling metaphor for racial, economic, and political power"(47), where "controlling women's sexuality, exalting maternity and breeding a virile race of empire-builders were widely perceived as the paramount means for controlling the health and wealth of the male imperial body"(47).

for a woman, because of his "feminine" docility. The servant is allowed into her bedroom in order to help her unpack her suitcase. She mistakes the male servant as a female maid, describing him as an "individual clothed in white muslin, with a quantity of black hair twisted up with a large comb, who at once began to unpack and help me in the handiest way...and was most useful" (51). Later when she realizes his gender identity, she justifies her blunder by stating that "the men are so small, and have such effeminate faces and such tiny hands, that they would look very like women, even if they did not wear long hair and combs; but when they do that, and wrap themselves up in long white muslin garments into the bargain, how can one be expected to know the difference"(53).

But a collapse of body boundaries between native men and British women cannot be easily accommodated by imperial discourses, especially imperial discourses which accommodate children. As Anna Davin argues, children are a "national asset" (88) and the production of children for the nation and empire become crucial for imperial women in the early twentieth century.[97] Such tendencies are displayed in Thompson's nineteenth century text when she must not only rear but instruct the children in how to relate to England's national identity as a commercial empire. In keeping with the Baden-Powell ideology of boyhood, the education of the children is a patriotic duty when Thompson constructs Ceylon not only as a site of adventure, but also as a possible site for continued

[97] See Mary E Stuart for a somewhat similar account where Stuart addresses her text not to her children but to women who are connected with or wish to establish connections with the men in duty in the colonies. She constructs herself as a maternal figure whose concern is for her son Rob's welfare in Ceylon. While Stuart predominantly narrates the workings of the cocoa estate while she visits her son, she also assumes as her readership mothers who "will like to have some idea of the sort of life their dear ones lead in Ceylon"(10) as well as "some young English girls whose love dreams include a possible home in this delightful island"(10). Hence her text is interspersed with advice for women, mothers and future fiancés in facilitating the presence of the men in Ceylon. Hence she states that "[y]our boys who are in exile here lead terribly monotonous lives of duty"(211) and states, "do your very utmost to brighten even a few of this perpetual sameness"(211).

colonization and control. Positioning herself as a member of the imperial race, Thompson attempts to inculcate colonial values among her children when she anxiously outlines the benefits of British empire.

M. Daphne Kutzer points out how "[e]mpire and exploration lend themselves to sensationalism, to exoticism, to ceremony, to jargon and lingo and secret societies, all of which have an appeal for children, and especially boys of the period"(10). Thompson too directs her travel narrative to her boys. Assuming the role of the mother who supports the future career prospects of her sons, Ceylon is a place to be explored, discovered and assimilated. The fact that Ceylon is an island on which these adventures take place adds to this imperial mothering evident in Thompson's text. Joseph Bristow argues that the islands which are "geographically sealed-off units" provide "the possibility of representing colonialist dreams and fears in miniature"(94). He notes that islands "provide an appositely 'child-like' space which boys can easily circumnavigate without revealing any lack of manful maturity" (94).[98] Ceylon is such a space although the one who navigates is not a boy but Thompson, the imperial mother, herself.

Hence, Thompson attempts to narrate adventures in Ceylon which mainly satisfy general colonial male ideologies, by insisting at times on the image of the colonial woman as alone and undefended. For instance, Thompson tells of an incident when her party got lost and had to stay overnight in a makeshift hut. Yet, they are able to negotiate the potentially hostile environment and transform the tale into an adventure Thompson can later relate with relish. Further, the colonial party attracts a lot of native interest when "[a]ll the inhabitants of the place gathered round, and as we had neither doors nor

[98] For more on the use of island stories for the purposes of imperialism in the nineteenth century, see Joseph Bristow.

windows, they had a full view of our operations, and seemed much amused" (108). Of this group, Thompson herself becomes an object of attention: "I was evidently an object of the greatest interest and curiosity to them, which was accounted for, as I was only the second or third European woman who had been there"(108). Roles reverse when Thompson is made acutely conscious of native surveillance: "There was no escaping them, and when [she] retired to [her] little room to change [her] dress [she] found a row of black eyes peeping through the leaves outside the square hole which served as window"(108).

While this episode is in keeping with boys' adventure novels, it also recounts a scene where the Victorian woman is subject to the gaze of the colonized. Hence it is not only an innocent excursion where the party gets lost, but is also a veiled lesson in male responsibility of upholding the notion of Victorian virtuous womanhood. Thompson is an object of curiosity for the native observers, and it is precisely what she represents--white womanhood--which must be safeguarded by her adventuresome boys through the proper rule of empire.

However her anxieties are not confined merely to notions of the returned gaze of the villagers. For instance, when Thompson's party is lost in the interior of Ceylon, the native headman or Arachchi whom they come across is hardly helpful. He displays no servile attitude to the English party, perhaps because he occupies a privileged class position in the Sinhalese hierarchy. Thompson finds him a sulky fellow, and "not inclined to do much for us till Joseph told him we were people of great importance, and that if he did not do his best for us, and get us all we wanted, he would get into trouble with government"(109). While his lack of subservience is read by Thompson as a mark

of arrogance, his actions also suggest the interracial tensions in the context of English superiority and entitlement. He must be threatened and coerced into service as Thompson narrates, revealing her own awareness that British colonial control is resisted within by the native population.

But what is significant is that though she constructs moments of anxiety in Ceylon, she also attempts to dispel them by referring to the "natural" servility of Sinhalese men. Thompson notes that the Sinhalese men make "capital" servants, and are able to glide about barefoot, waiting silently at the tables. At one point, she comments on the servants who are asleep on the verandah and passages and notes how "they do not go to bed as we do, but just put down on a mat wherever they like and go to sleep"(53). While her comments ignore the racial and class realities of the positioning of the Sinhalese as colonized subjects, there is an attempt in the text to naturalise and hence subdue colonial tensions present in the text by incorporating the Sinhalese into domesticity, reminiscent of Sullivan and Carpenter.

Hence, her narrative frequently shifts from Ceylon as a site of danger, to a manageable environment, unable to exclusively reinforce the idea of the defenseless woman, revealing the contradictions of the discourses themselves. J.S. Bratton comments that women had to reconcile the contradictory ideals of a pioneering femininity and domesticity in British colonial narratives. He argues that "it was difficult to find a balance in narrative romance between such opposite ideological constructs as spiritualized, disembodied femininity and vigorous pioneering motherhood"(197). He states that "[a]llowing the heroine active participation in imperial adventures inevitably leads, at some point, to a clash of ideological designs, in which masculine behavior will

be demanded of her"(201).

Thompson's dilemma is exemplified in the intriguing illustration which begins her narrative, which gets incorporated into the text by the editor (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. "A queer looking fellow ...came into the verandah, and bade me salaam". A Peep into Ceylon: A Book of Travel Written for Children. Mrs. Arthur Thompson. London: Christian Knowledge Society, 1886. 1. Slide 1.

The reader is presented with an image of a native man and a white woman facing each other. The print, inserted just before the title page reads, a "queer looking fellow

...came into the verandah, and bade me salaam" (79).[99] A woman sits with her back to the viewer on a cane chair, a stool in front of her with tea and a few delicacies. She wears a dress made up of a long skirt and long sleeves, her skirt in three tiers, complementing the ruffles that adorn the high neck of her dress. A drop earring is slightly visible to the viewer. She delicately holds a teacup in her hand and her hair is neatly gathered at the back.

While the European woman is fully clothed, the man is not, a piece of cloth loosely gathered around his loins. A turban is wrapped around his head. He leans forward towards the woman in deference, his right arm crossing his forehead in order to greet his superior. His face is slightly discernible, as he lowers his head as a form of respect, with only one earring and a bracelet visible to the viewer. He carries an umbrella and a staff, and adopts a subservient demeanor in the manner in which he stands slouching a little. He is partially cut off from the frame when only his upper body is foregrounded, his bare legs merging with the plants that surround him. But the tropical setting is however incomplete without an abundance of natural vegetation which fills the scene. At a distance one can see traces of a river bank. Two lush trees frame the setting, while a monkey sits on a branch, its eyes directed towards the native.

The image reflects the tensions embedded in discourses of native male menace when the encounter between the man and the woman is an ambivalent rendering of colonial menace. On the one hand, the image can be read as one which reveals a degree of anxiety over the white woman's body. The idyllic setting where even nature is in harmony with the European presence, where even wild animals roam about in peace with

[99] Salaam is a form of salutation, usually among Muslims.

the English woman, is interrupted by the presence of the man. Her taut upper back and forward leaning posture can be read as in an indication that she is startled by the figure which appears in front of her, shaken out of her afternoon reverie by him. The nakedness and phallic like objects all can be read as indicative of the threat which the man poses to the woman. The phallic like rod which accompanies him, with the long stick shaped handle of the umbrella is somewhat sexually suggestive.

The necessity to construct such a threat is evident when the illustration supposedly embodying such relations presents a white woman in contact with a man who is supposedly not of Sinhalese origin, in contrast with Thompson's narrative which recounts her various interactions with Sinhalese peasants. Markers of effeminacy or ambiguity associated with the Sinhalese native are erased when a man of Tamil origin is depicted, evident from his turban. As indicated before, Tamil men were acknowledged as more masculine than Sinhalese men in British travel accounts.

But on the other hand, such anxieties about the interaction between white women and Sinhalese men are contained in this image by other signifiers. Nakedness itself is an ambivalent sign when it signifies both savagery and vulnerability. It also foreshadows his vulnerability in the presence of the white woman. His posture and entreating gesture all convey an attitude of subservience. The umbrella that he carries too is a feminine sign for the British readership, further defusing his masculinity, suggesting a kind of gender ambiguity which is not signaled through his body. It is he who is objectified in the image when he becomes the object of the female gaze. While she meets his gaze, his own gaze seems surreptitious, and the viewer is unable to discern clearly if he furtively looks at the woman or directs his gaze to the ground.

Almost missed by the casual observer, the monkey is critical in opening up the native man's subjectivity. Sitting next to the woman, it too directs its gaze towards the man, seemingly in league with the woman. The woman and the monkey frame the man's body, forming a triangle with the man at the apex. So he is pinioned on the intersection of several gazes which criss-cross, arrested in a posture of compliance. The man is the spectacle, unable to challenge their gaze with an accusatory stare, merely reinforcing the power the woman already possesses as the English subject over him.

These unresolved tensions make visible the ambivalence of such discourses of native male menace in Thompson's narrative. It is unable to construct Thompson as an "object" in the Ceylon, foreclosing the possibility of any "dangerous liaisons" in the colony. The social myth, necessary to authorize and legitimate British expansion, is disrupted when the experience of a white woman in Ceylon cannot be simplistically reduced to an account of exotic savagery and fear. This proves unsettling for the colonial authorities, as evident through the insertion of the illustration. This highlights how imperial authority and colonial rule were gendered, gender inequalities becoming essential to the structure of colonial racism and imperial rule.

Therefore, even if the abject figure of the gender ambiguous Sinhalese male is unsettling in these texts, he remains resistant to these attempts of erasure. While Baker, Sullivan and Haekel appropriate the native male bodies to negotiate erotic tensions and normalize heterosexual desire, Thompson's text reveals the underlying fear of the potential entanglements of English women with native men. Yet all these texts fail to contain and discipline these male bodies within the imperial narratives, and the Sinhalese men become ambivalent representatives of Ceylon. Far from reinforcing a sense of

English cultural and racial dominance through Sinhalese men, the production of ambivalence disturbs these accounts when they reveal Victorian anxieties of shared spaces between English men and women and Sinhalese men.

Absolutely Superb! Julia Margaret Cameron's Absent Gardener(s)

As earlier stated, what particularly interests me in this chapter is how gender ambiguity provides an opportunity for intervention for some Victorian women artists, and operates as a means to contest oppressive systems of gender and sexuality in empire. Of course, one cannot take for granted colonial rules for practice, evident through the various permutations of sexual boundaries in colonies, highlighted by many writers such as Laura Ann Stoler. One has to only think of Claire Denis's film *Chocolat* (1988) as an example of the complexities of colonial sexual and power relations.[100] But while travelers such as Mrs. Thompson are constrained by imperial discourses, and fashions her text cautiously, Julia Margaret Cameron uses gender ambiguity to open up spaces in which the Sinhalese men become available for colonial women, if not desirable.[101] Although Thompson struggles to find a way of relating to the gender ambiguous Sinhalese male, at times reaffirming oppressive patriarchal norms, Cameron boldly identifies with the Ceylonese through one of her photographs, her most provocative

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[100] *Chocolat* (1988) revolves around a white woman's return to her native home in pre-independence French Cameroon, which conjures memories of her childhood. The film explores the social, cultural and sexual tensions between Protee, the African "houseboy" and Aimee, her mother, reflecting the complexities of colonization.

[101] Ashis Nandy argues that, "white women in India were generally more exclusive and racist because they unconsciously saw themselves as the sexual competitors of Indian men, with whom their men had established an unconscious homo-eroticized bonding" (9). Yet in Ceylon, I argue that rivalry is problematised by the ambiguous male body.

encounter with empire.

Cameron's engagement with the colonized in this photograph (1876) reflects her frustration with a wary eroticism evident in the previous examples (fig. 9). While those representations of the Sinhalese men often attempt to subordinate the male body to imperial stereotypes, and efface sexual dissidence, Cameron's photograph of two Sinhalese men purposely centers on the male body, demonstrating her erotic investment in the Sinhalese male body. Softly erotic and homoerotic, it is significant as eroticized images of men in general are less common in nineteenth century representations. Robert Aldrich argues that "[p]art of the explanation for the rarity of such materials is that most painters and photographers were probably heterosexual men, composing works that presumably reflected their own tastes and those of their patrons and the majority of their public" (149).[102] Thus Cameron, being a female artist, transgresses boundaries by portraying blatantly eroticized men. But these claims first require a detailed analysis of the image.

Upon first glance, one encounters two men posing for the photograph, the older man on the left edge of the frame captured slightly at an angle, his face in profile. He is bare-chested and wears a printed sarong from the waist downwards, bunched up at his navel.

[102] See Robert Aldrich for a detailed examination of the relationship between homosexuality and empire.

Fig. 9. Cameron, Julia Margaret. Group, Ceylon. Gernsheim Collection. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center. The University of Texas at Austin.

His hair is gathered at the back, neatly tied into a knot, with a long arched comb across the front of his head. He sports a moderately long beard, and a bit of his right arm and shoulder are rudely excluded from the frame, although his right hand is visible, cradling a pineapple. He has a placid expression on his face, and seems to have lowered his gaze, perhaps fixing it on the youth who is placed next to him in the photograph.

While the older man is cut off partially from the frame, the boy's whole figure is laid before the viewer, although in an intriguing fashion. Although he is not centered, his

pose with his bare shoulders and back, and his nakedness both arrest the viewer. The younger male is posed in almost a posterior view, the viewer's gaze made to rest on his near naked body which seems to be on display. Although the youth stands at an angle, his face caught in a three quarter length profile is level with the older man's chest. His hair too is rolled up into a bunch behind and he is nearly naked with only a loin cloth around him, gathered at the back with a piece of string. He stands facing the hedge behind him, strategically positioned behind and amidst lush jackfruit leaves, foregrounding his body, his bare shoulders and buttocks readily available to the viewer's gaze. His left arm extends forward, on which a clay vessel is placed, its rounded shape mimicking the contours of the man's body. He does not rest his gaze on the object he holds. Instead his lowered eyes rest on a space unfathomable to the viewer.

It is critical at this instance to note that while Cameron's local prints of women mostly featured her Tamil domestic and plantation workers, the prints of native men in an intimate group focuses not on Tamil but Sinhalese men. While one can assume that she frequently came into contact with Tamil men than Sinhalese men given that it was largely Tamils who were recruited as laborers in the coffee plantations, her choice to highlight two Sinhalese men is noteworthy. It signals her recognition of the potential of the perceived ambiguity of the Sinhalese male for female artists in Ceylon. Cameron's task is certainly facilitated by the gender indeterminacy surrounding the print. While the figure to the right of the frame is male, the beardless face, the buttocks on display and the slender and fragile figure in contrast with the older man, could very well indicate a female. This is reinforced by the fact that the lower body is turned conveniently away from the viewer in order to veil his sexuality, whereas the older male is turned towards

the viewer displaying his male body for the spectator to well discern. Perhaps it is this very indeterminacy which leads some critics to label this photograph as that of a man and a woman, misreading the long hair neatly swept back, and the loin cloth as signs of femininity.[103]

While Thompson's text displays competing imperial discourses being acted out on white women, Cameron's photograph reveals how women are granted at least imaginative access to colonized men in Ceylon. Under British surveillance, many nineteenth century women travelers chose to document Ceylon by often concentrating on the picturesque in their illustrations.[104] They mostly focused on the scenic possibilities offered by the tropics, framing the colonized in a pictorial setting, a contained landscape. The indigenous people were normally distanced, and appropriated into conveying an aesthetic agenda. The picturesque steered away from an erotic gaze, the British women persuaded into becoming spectators of empire rather than participants, reluctant to transgress body boundaries. For instance, many picturesque illustrations of Ceylon focus on the quaint, attractive sites of Ceylon such as the hills of Nuwaraeliya and the ruins of Anuradhapura, where inhabitants are merely a part of the backdrop, figures to beautify the pictorial.

As a woman photographer Cameron indeed treads dangerous ground when she

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[103] In Colin Ford's Julia Margaret Cameron: A Critical Biography, the photograph is indexed as "Kalutara Peasant Man and Woman, 1875-9" (200).

[104] The Picturesque is a mode of representation of nature which emphasizes its prettiness and its charm, as opposed to the Sublime, which emphasizes its force and overwhelming power. Indira Ghose argues that the picturesque ideally suited women, a strategy "evoked in the service of simultaneous imaginative appropriation of the other and detachment from the other"(11), serving to "epitomize women's position in the Empire"(11) as detached spectators of empire, outsiders to socio historical conditions that govern colonial rule.

discards the general conventions of picturing native men. She opts to photograph the Sinhalese on her own terms, abandoning the picturesque gaze, unflinchingly gazing at the male. Instead of romanticizing the colonized in a tropicalised setting, Cameron daringly lingers on the male body, steering away from such a muted convention. Marianne North, the botanical painter and naturalist, visiting Cameron in 1876 in colonial Ceylon, states that Cameron "took such a fancy to the back of one of [the Ceylonese men] (which she said was absolutely superb) that she insisted on her son retaining him as her gardener though she had no garden and he did not know even the meaning of the word" (North, I, 1892, p.315).[105] North refers to this episode apparently to highlight the fact that Cameron's interest in photography had not diminished while in Ceylon, the Ceylonese eliciting enough aesthetic appreciation in the photographer. Yet it also suggests an erotic appeal in Cameron towards her subject, not overtly permitted to European women in the colonies. As such, Cameron is compelled to procure the Ceylonese man under the pretext of domestic help as she cannot retain him as an object of admiration in the household, a move reminiscent of strategies employed by Edward Sullivan, Edward Carpenter and Ernst Haekel.

If Cameron's fascination with the man is perhaps because of her interest to picture his "splendid" body, what is intriguing is that Cameron's desire to photograph the male seems to have been thwarted, especially since her Ceylonese photographs mostly focus on portraits of women, posed either individually or in intimate groups. While Cameron's admiration for the Sinhalese man's back questions the sexual and racial hierarchies erected by the west between the white women and the native men, none of her surviving

[105] North visits Cameron in January 1877, in Kalutara where Cameron was residing with her son. For more on North's visit and her work, see Laura Posonby.

Ceylonese prints exclusively figures a portrait of a Ceylonese man posing individually although she does photograph men in either intimate groups or large groups.

Yet the print of the two Sinhalese men is significant as it clearly demonstrates how Cameron reinstates her own imperial authority over the colonized subject by discarding a self effacing and distancing perspective employed by a picturesque and ethnographic gaze. Instead, Cameron lingers on the male body, sensuality becoming available for her consumption. Although reminiscent of the allegorical mode Cameron readily deployed in England, the deliberate positioning of the youth with his back towards the camera hints at the photographer's wish to draw attention onto his near-naked body, the light softening his outline, adding to the sensuousness of his portrait.[106] The clay vessel at the center of the photograph alludes to the round contours of the youth's body, although the light blurs on the native's lower back, helping him merge into the leaves around him. The older man's gaze is made to rest on the boy, once again redirecting the viewer's gaze on to his provocative pose and lowered eyes. This photograph hints at the erotic and exotic body in a tropicalised colonial space, the Sinhalese clearly objectified and sexualized.

The very tensions in the photograph between the exhibition of the figures on the one hand and the sense that they might have their own intimate relationship, from which the viewer is excluded, on the other, are intriguing. The quiet but introspective expressions of both figures exclude the viewer, dislodging any notion that the spectator is privy to their intimate absorption. The homoeroticism that pervades the photograph is intensified by the boy's posture of being pushed against the wall, the fruit hanging in the

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[106] Cameron, in addition to making portraits both of male and female subjects, also staged tableaux and posed her sitters in situations that imitated allegorical paintings.

middle suggesting a sexual encounter.

The use of men as sexual/erotic subjects by Cameron at a time when the male nude let alone the nude native body was a forbidden sight for female artists, not only helps seize masculine ocular power for Cameron, but also eroticises her gaze, rescuing it from the bounds of propriety, portraying interracial as well as homoerotic desire in the colonies. Although her attempts at contesting such gendered spaces are at the expense of objectifying, even violently, the Sinhalese male, Cameron's portrayal of the intimacy between the two male figures constructs an alternative representation of Victorian womanhood in Ceylon, where new forms of white female desire could be addressed.

Therefore, she enacts the representation of the Sinhalese men in order to expose the anxieties of homoerotic and interracial desire in the colonies. This is linked to her gendered identity.[107] Cameron occupies a precarious subject position as a woman as well as a woman photographer in the colonies, whose status in Victorian society is ambivalent, especially since she was born and brought up in the colonies--India. Her work is representative of her own ambivalence, caught between both the familial self and the exotic other, between a white subjectivity and a racialised body, perhaps exposing the crisis in unitary notions of the self.

Conclusion: Withered Women

While discourses of gender ambiguity of the Sinhalese male privilege English

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[107] Laura Posonby observes that North's unconventional attitude evident through her lack of regard for social customs and conventions, feminine propriety etc is what draws her towards Cameron who is somewhat alike: "The two women had much in common-both independent minded, both taking up their life's work late in life and both despising the conventions of society"(62).

women artists such as Cameron and sexualize colonial relations, the Sinhalese women remain marginal, outcast from the triangulated relationship among the ambiguous Sinhalese male body and the English men and women. Although all these accounts register the capacity of the ambiguous male body to deflect colonial power, they can only faintly acknowledge Sinhalese women.[108] Scarcely discernible as the female sex, the women are represented as withered and old, hardly evident and sexual. If the construction of the gender ambiguous Sinhalese male is illustrative of the contestation and negotiation of both British and Sinhalese identities in Ceylon, the women, inhabiting the edges of Ceylon, construct even a more problematic relationship to colonial Ceylon. As tokens of neglect in these visual and textual narratives, the Sinhalese women are potent reminders of elements of vexation in Ceylon. As oddities, not subscribing to stereotypical British notions of the erotic native woman, the women become all the more striking when they dramatically call into question the normative constructions of the native female subjects in Ceylon vis-à-vis imperial rule.

Hence, Ceylon itself is a site which interrogates imperial claims on the island. The inability to visually and discursively contain the gender ambiguous male body by these artists and travel writers reveals the anxieties surrounding the loss of political and social control of the island by the British. They are vivid reminders of the limits of colonial possession and control, and the potential failure of the containment of ambiguities of gender and race. Ceylon becomes a sphere of male and female disorder, where stereotypical gender relations are questioned and racial hierarchies critiqued.

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[108] Critics such as Gayatri Spivak have expressed their concern that the native or the subaltern woman is always taken as an object of knowledge by colonial and indigenous readers, written and argued about, but not allowed a discursive position from which to speak.

Chapter III

Landscapes of Desire: Picturesque Re-imaginings of Colonial Ceylon

Introduction: A Thwarted Gaze

William Knighton's *Forest Life in Ceylon*, (1854), a quasi-fictional British travelogue of historical and natural sites of Ceylon, begins with an amusing account. Male passengers on board a ship yearn to spot Ceylon but are unable to see the fabled land. Knighton, the narrator, is handed a telescope by the Captain, while some, "armed with glasses of their own," strain to spot Ceylon on the horizon upon their entry into the Indian Ocean. Others "eagerly [await] a loan of one." Yet the result is disappointing: "I strained my eyes. I looked intently in the direction indicated; I readjusted the glass, and wiped the lenses; I looked again as earnestly as if some important result depended on the issue, but in vain; I saw no Ceylon." Those with the glasses are equally "unsuccessful" and the one man who claims he saw Ceylon "declared he did, but no one ever minded what he said." While both the Captain and the chief-officer insist that Ceylon is "very distinct" on the horizon, the narrator only sees the "same impenetrable haze on the horizon everything misty and obscure"(2).

Frustrated with the inaccessibility and invisibility of Ceylon, the party hastily abandons the side of the ship in favor of the fore part of the ship in order to sight the isle. Knighton casts the gaze in violent terms when the men "poised [their] glasses, like rifles, some on the bulwarks, some on the ropes, and looked intently"(3). This elucidates the complex relations between the gazes of the men behind the viewfinder of a binocular instrument, and the gun.[109] While guns use violence in the acquisition and domination of

[109] Susan Sontag makes a similar argument about the relationship between vision and violence when she observes that photography and hunting overlap in their vocabulary. #See Susan Sontag, On Photography, 7.

colonial territory, the men's gazes too attempt to "capture" the land through surveillance, reflecting the violence behind such visual appropriation. Such "predatory" gazes that scan the landscape act as instruments of power and control. But while Knighton seeks refuge behind the glasses and attempts to access Ceylon, the magnifying glasses fail to catch the desired image. It is of no avail, although the travelers attribute it to their "unpractised eyes" (3).

Even the conditions under which the travelers attempt to view Ceylon do not favor the gaze of the men. They are compelled to battle the "broiling sunshine"(3). With "heroic perseverance" they "combated the sun" (4), but "all to no purpose" (4). If the glass cannot help, neither can the naked eye when, amidst a "a clear star light night"(4), they gaze "intently in the direction indicated, as if then, without glass or sun, [they] might perchance succeed in catching a glimpse of the wished-for-island"(4). Yet even these efforts result in disappointment.

But while male gazes are thwarted, the women's gazes are speedily dismissed and ridiculed as ineffective by Knighton. He describes how the ladies, with handkerchiefs and veils over their necks, join the men on the deck to capture the elusive sight of Ceylon. They can only try and when they do see, it cannot be even remotely acknowledged by the men. When one lady "*thought* she discerned something"(3) [my emphasis], she only manages to see the end of a "stick" or the mast which she is even incompetent to name, resulting in comic effect: "That's the end of a stick, of that stick there with the sail tied to it-the jib-jib, *what do you call it*?"(4) [my emphasis]. While her perceived field of view does not extend beyond the ship when all that she can discern is the mast of the ship, she is then ineffectual at even identifying what she does see. It is

interesting that she must seek the help of the men to recognize and name the object in sight. She can only be an observer while the male party must examine, interpret, theorize and disclaim what she has just seen, demonstrating women's "differential position for the realization of the male orientalist's desire for the exotic" (Behdad 97).[110] Therefore her gaze, as representative of the gazes of the female party, is totally annulled and rendered unreliable. But in this instance the gazes of the men are equally inadequate.

It is not only the women's gazes which are discounted by the male passengers on board, but also that of the yellow-haired man. The yellow-haired gentleman, from the outset, is constructed as eccentric and odd, a figure of otherness. He is identified as the "tall yellow-haired man" and is set apart from Knighton and his men. While they gather on the deck "in a body," he is compelled to follow the men, along with the women. His masculinity is at stake when he sides with the women on the ship. He acknowledges with pleasure the gaze of the women while the others deride their claims: "'Bravo,' said the tall yellow-haired man, in ecstasy, 'you see it. I thought you would, as I placed the glass"(3). As such, he is relegated to a peripheral status on board.[111]

Therefore, while the captain's authoritative gaze is acknowledged by the men, the

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[110] See Ali Behdad's argument that "the desire for the exotic depends for its realization on the differential role of the female companion as the stable observer and admirer of such adventures"(97). He notes the above in relation to Lady Anne Blunt's Pilgrimage to Nejd, where Wilfrid Blunt positions himself as the explorer and adventurer while his wife, Anne, is placed in the encampment, in the position of "the observer, the sketcher, and the recorder"(97). Behdad observes that "Wilfrid's identity as a heroic adventurer can be constructed differentially only through the mediated role of Anne as the deheroicized female witness"(97).

[111] I see a similarity between the "tall yellow-haired man" and what Brett Farmer describes as the gay spectator. Farmer argues that the gay spectator functions as a disquieting figure, and "poses a scandalous affront to dominant sensibilities. It represents a cultural perversion, an abnormal deviation, an outrageous refusal of 'appropriate' modes of conduct and taste"(2). The visual signifiers surrounding his repeated identification as the "tall yellow-haired man" sets the man apart from Knighton and his men. The visual and behavioral markers along with his peripheral status on board locate him in the role of such a gay spectator, a spectatorship that proves threatening to Knighton and his men. For more on gay male spectatorship, see Brett Farmer.

yellow-haired gentleman is marginalized as a potential spectator of Ceylon. His claim to sight and thereby power is inadmissible. Even if he "prided himself on his nautical dress and knowledge" and "declared he did [see Ceylon]," "no one ever minded what he said" (2). His gaze which challenges the gazes of the other men on the ship, cannot be accepted because it highlights the impotency of the gazes of Knighton and his party. It is significant then that the yellow-haired man, along with the marginalized women, is dispelled from the narrative once Knighton lands in Ceylon. While their gazes are discredited on board, they are completely written off when the group arrives in Ceylon.

The irony is that it is Knghton and his male group who are visually impaired and denied visual possession of the island, although they are quick to disregard the others who claim sight of Ceylon. In fact, the mastery and control of the gaze usually attributed to men cannot be wielded within this site. It is interesting that the yellow-haired man "smiled at [their] want of nautical vision"(3). But Knighton is quick to discredit the efforts of the Captain, his officers and the yellow-haired man when he suggests that their act of seeing is merely imaginative, "at last coming to the conclusion that imagination had a great deal to with the matter, and that the Captain, the chief officer, and the yellow-haired man, knew the land ought to be there, and therefore they saw it"(4). While the yellow-haired man is incorporated into the Captain's group, re-assimilated back into the male sphere perhaps because of his power to sight Ceylon, Knighton still interrogates not only the possibility of their seeing Ceylon but also the validity of such an act.

Knighton and the others' frustrations build especially because of the exotic associations surrounding the island. Ceylon is constructed as a potential and pleasurable object of the gaze for the travelers, primarily a place of nature: "And Ceylon too! Such an

island of mysterious interest and beauty-'its breezes, perfumes; its forests, the rarest and choicest trees; its pebbles, gems,' as a flowery writer describes it"(5).[112] Believing in these fantasies of paradise spun around the island, Knighton expresses his frustration when he states, "it was tantalizing to know that the glorious island was right ahead, visible to the eye of the Captain, the chief officer, and our tall yellow-haired friend, and that we could not even faintly discern it"(4). He contemplates seeing the "delights of shore"(5), even before he has glimpsed the island, but the imagined riches of the island become elusive on board.

In order to construct Ceylon as an effective source of pleasure, Knighton dismisses any unease surrounding the denial of access to Ceylon. This is especially pertinent when two of the men, not sharing the same zeal to spot Ceylon, construct Ceylon as a negative space, a disappointing site, eliciting frustration for the viewer. Knighton states that only two of the party had visited Ceylon before, "the only two that seemed to know nothing of the island indeed, for all the others had read of it, had talked of it, had studied it; they, on the other hand, thought they should have enough of it when they got there, as had been the case before, and were therefore but too anxious to banish it from their thoughts"(5). Ceylon is depicted as a space which is overwhelming, a place they have had "enough of," a site of repugnance for these two passengers which needs to be expelled from their memory. It is mysterious and unrepresentable, when the two men "seemed to know nothing of the island," claiming zero prior knowledge of the site. However it also outlines an "orientalist" moment when scholarship supersedes

[112] In fact Ceylon, in several travel narratives, is noted for the fragrant and especially spicy odors that come to distinguish the land. Many travelers describe their first impressions of Ceylon on board through the sense of smell that lingers in the environment. Yet such perfumes are imaginary as some note.

experience, when the travelers who have not been to Ceylon are already familiar with the isle, having read, studied and discussed it.[113]

Hence the exoticism surrounding Ceylon is threatened when Ceylon, at a closer distance, proves not so inviting and accessible. The apprehension surrounding the deferral of the fulfillment of Knighton's desire to access the exotic titillation of Ceylon is alleviated when he insists on a picturesque framework to locate Ceylon. Knighton's desire to see and thereby stake a claim to Ceylon is deferred while on ship, but is seemingly gratified when Ceylon finally comes under his purview. While Knighton observes that the bay is "filled with sunken rocks and hidden dangers of all kinds," he discards any suggestions of danger by framing Ceylon in the mode of the picturesque. Ceylon is framed into an orderly display when he notes how the "long line of green vegetation which fringed the shore, consisting of cocoa-nut trees, contrasted beautifully with the white foam of the sea" and "in the harbour, masses of white and red, without apparent order or regularity, indicated the town"(6).

Therefore, when the island is finally in sight, it is subsequently consumed as a place of nature by Knighton, frozen on an aesthetic tableau as a picture. Despite the diversity of its social, cultural and political landscape, Ceylon's natural landscape is seized as representative of the island perhaps because Knighton's journey to Ceylon is predicated on Ceylon being a tropical site on which he can mostly hunt exotic game.

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[113] Mary Louise Pratt suggests that the act of discovery in Victorian exploration is usually viewed as a passive experience, but can become laudable through texts. Pratt argues that "while the ordeal required to make the discovery is unforgettably concrete, in the mid-Victorian paradigm the 'discovery' itself, even within the ideology of discovery, has no existence of its own. It only gets 'made' for real after the traveler (or other survivor) returns home, and brings it into being through texts: a name on a map, a report to the Royal Geographical society, the Foreign Office, the London Mission Society, a diary, a lecture, a travel book"(204).

Knighton emphasizes Ceylon as a site of uncontested nature and tropicality, precisely because it is not only that.

W.J.T. Mitchell, drawing upon Jay Appleton's theories which connect "landscape formulas to animal behavior and 'habitat theory,'" explains that, according to Appleton, the "standard picturesque landscape is especially pleasing to this eye because it typically places the observer in a protected, shaded spot (a 'refuge'), with screens on either side to dart behind, or to entice curiosity, and an opening to provide deep access at the center"(16).[114] Mitchell further elaborates on the ideal spectator of landscape:

> The picturesque structure of this observer's visual field is simply a foregrounding of the scene of "natural representation" itself, "framing" or putting it on a stage. It hardly matters whether the scene is picturesque in the narrow sense; even if the features are sublime, dangerous and so forth, the frame is always there as the guarantee that it is only a picture, only picturesque, and the observer is safe in another place, outside the frame, behind the binoculars, the camera, or the eyeball, in the dark refuge of the skull. (16)

According to Mitchell, a picturesque gaze is deployed in the colonies as a taming device to control and stabilize a potentially disruptive setting. Similarly, the picturesque provides an aesthetic frame for Knighton to subsume Ceylon but nevertheless maintain a distance from the site, in order to wield a sense of mastery over Ceylon and avoid a sense of vulnerability that the site may invoke. He is anxious to manipulate and harness the landscape by reveling in the land laid before him, and a picturesque gaze allows him the

[114] See Jay Appleton.

privilege of a spectatorship that can adopt and mobilize a mode of visual power over the colonized land.

But his desire to mediate his relationship with Ceylon through a picturesque gaze is troubled especially when Knighton and the rest of the group encounter some of the Ceylonese natives immediately before landing. His preconceived conceptions of Ceylon are complicated when they cannot shape the social spaces that he imagined before his arrival. Knighton cannot simplistically produce Ceylon as a site of gratification when he comes across the Ceylonese boats men, who meet the English party in their outriggers. They are described as degenerate "specimens" and Knighton is unable to comprehend how "these gibbering, long armed, brown naked animals were fellow creatures"(7).

He attempts to pictorialise these sights nevertheless, revealing how racism is compatible with the picturesque, a point to which I shall return later in the chapter. He observes that "the contrast between their brown, shriveled-up, wrinkled skins, and the scanty white or blue cloth which they wore round their loins, all formed a picture so like that which a party of tamed monkeys would present"(8).[115] While the picturesque accommodates such ethnocentric comments, he is unable to disassociate himself from the people and maintain the necessary distance needed between the spectator and the object

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[115] This passage carries a striking resemblance to Marlowe's reaction in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness when he observes the primitive wilderness of the interior of Congo. Marlowe records "a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling..." (32). Marlow's reflections on the prehistoric native are similar to Knighton's: "They howled and leaped and spun, and made horrible face; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity -- like yours -- the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response of frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you -- you so remote from the night of the first ages -- could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything -- because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What is there after all? ...-- who can tell? -- but truth -- truth stripped of its cloak of time. Let the fool gape and shudder -- the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must be as much a man as these on shore. He must meet the truth" (32).

in order to implement such a picturesque gaze. He is profoundly affected by the revulsion associated with such a picture: "it was not without disgust that [he] gazed at [the natives]"(8). He looks at them with disgust, "disgust, mingled with something of indignation, that these animals should be of the same species"(8) as himself.

He dispels such disturbing visions by focusing on the natural landscape and emphasizing his hunting exploits. Upon landing, he continuously attempts to reinforce a picturesque gaze when he ignores the material realities of the native people of Ceylon in order to construct a pictorial rendering of Ceylon. He emphasizes the "novelty of the picture" of native life, with small huts, cocoa-nut leaf thatches, and natives squatting on their heels, and (mis)interprets such lives as a battle "not for existence, but for luxury and enjoyment"(15). But his efforts to violently efface and subsequently subjugate the Ceylonese in these acts of representation are fraught when the people refuse to be contained within a picturesque framework, as evident through the boat men. Further, Knighton's efforts to access Ceylon through a picturesque gaze and thereby gain visual possession of the land are undercut by the presence of the women and the yellow-haired man. While the men on board attempt to erase their gazes from spectatorship of Ceylon, the fact that the women as well as the yellow-haired man can mobilize Ceylon as a significant site to produce their own gazes, however marginalized by Knighton, is critical.

In fact, many travelers, in their published accounts of their tropical sojourns, comment on the incomprehensibility of Ceylon and the difficulty of containing Ceylon within the picturesque aesthetic. Artists such as Edward Lear lament the prospect of life in Ceylon, with "inedible food," "vulgar accommodation" and "the preponderance of

odious natives." While India offers him inexhaustible possibilities of landscape drawings, Ceylon defeats his expectations. In his *Indian Journal* (1874), he records how little is "graphically worthy or pretty"(215) in Ceylon. His descriptions of Ceylon are contradictory when he shifts back and forth from appreciation to disgust. He finds the roads "intensely picturesque"(216), and the vegetation "simply amazing and beyond all or any imitation"(217) but concludes that "Ceylon the long-looked-for is a bore of the first quality and as disgusting a place, at least in the phase I see of it, as I have known in any part of my travels"(220).

Other English travelers such as Samuel Baker also complicate picturesque renderings of Ceylon (1855). Baker, whose lengthy residence in Ceylon resulted in several publications mostly about his hunting expeditions, observes how Ceylon, noted for the fragrance of cinnamon, does not live up to its standards. He writes, "What fairy-like pleasure-grounds have we fondly anticipated!-what perfumes of spices, and all that our childish imaginations had pictured as the ornamental portions of a cinnamon garden!"(4). He points out what he disappointingly must reckon with: "vast area of scrubby low jungle, composed of cinnamon bushes, is seen to the right and left, before and behind. Above is a cloudless sky and a broiling sun; below, is snow-white sand of quartz, curious only in the possibility of its supporting vegetation"(4). He sums up the cinnamon gardens when he says, "[s]uch is the soil in which the cinnamon delights;--such are the cinnamon gardens, in which I delight not"(4).

In sum, Ceylon cannot be effectively domesticated into an enclosed pictorial framework by these observers. This anxiety to construct Ceylon in a particular fashion is visible in many other travel accounts of Ceylon, where certain fixed images circulate with

regularity. For instance, an image of a Kandyan Chieftain in his magnificent and elaborate outfit enters many a travel tale while the Kandyan dancers in their glittering dresses are another object of interest for the European. The talipot palm in full bloom captures a lot of artists and a native man gathering the tropical Jack fruit is yet another source of admiration. This suggests a pre-inscribed visual narrative in circulation, fitted to various diverse discourses surrounding Ceylon, projecting a quaint picture of the island.

As is apparent in Knighton's text, sites of rupture and disintegration of the picturesque gaze emerge in these depictions challenging these constructions of place. The picturesque becomes a tense and tenuous mode through which Knighton can access Ceylon when the "lead-in" native figures disrupt a clear view. While the picturesque framework provides access to Ceylon and facilitates the narrator's act of visual possession, it fails to erase the disruptive presence of the native bodies which interrupt such aesthetic contemplations, defying and interrogating picturesque constructions of Ceylon. I will demonstrate how these "lead-in" native figures who mediate the relationship between the observer and the observed, unsettle the beholder's picturesque gaze when they become a hazard in the picturesque composition of Ceylon, staring back at the space of the beholder, interrogating the established structures of power in place.

In particular, this chapter will examine how various writers and artists both utilized and challenged the picturesque to produce variant and contradictory ways of negotiating their engagements with the discourses of Ceylon. It will reveal how Ceylon is a contested site, an unstable locale, exposing the social and political realities of the isle which cannot be readily effaced. Thus, after defining the picturesque as an aesthetic

category, and exposing its ideological functions in the late nineteenth century, I examine several visual and verbal texts to analyze how it is manifest in multiple and quite contrary ways in the appropriation and conquest of the landscape. I will analyze ways in which the picturesque is disabled in Ceylon when these representations cannot establish the beholding subject in ownership of the land before them.

The Picturesque Aesthetic: Euro-centric Impositions

The category of the picturesque, which extended beyond painting and was used as a discursive and rhetorical strategy in travel literature as well as fiction, was popularized by the Reverend William Gilpin (1724-1804) in his *Essay Upon Prints* (1768) where he defined it as "a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture" (20). Not limited to landscape aesthetics, he noted that, "with regard to the term picturesque, I have always myself used it merely to denote such objects, as are proper subjects for painting."[116] Insisting that art remain faithful to nature, by emphasizing ruggedness and irregularity, Gilpin emphasized the importance of both texture and composition. The texture was to be rough, intricate and varied while the composition incorporated a "dark foreground" perhaps of framing trees, which was a means of "heightening visual perception" (Andrews 29). While the foreground could frame the picture, it could also "prevent one's eye from straying outside the canvas and to push it into the middle distance" (Andrews 29), which would give the impression of being submerged in the landscape.

Uvedale Price in *An Essay on the Picturesque* (1794), expanded the term by

[116] Quoted by Malcolm Andrews.

representing the picturesque as an alternative to the categories of the Beautiful and the Sublime, canonized by Burke. He argues that the Picturesque and the Beautiful are "founded on very opposite qualities, the one on smoothness, the other on roughness"(83) and that the Sublime, "being founded on principles of awe and terror" (99) is once again remote from the picturesque. Rejecting both the Beautiful and its preoccupation with classical symmetry, and the Sublime, with its obsessions of grandeur, Price located the picturesque in between these two categories. Hence the picturesque aesthetic favored irregularity and roughness of landscape, but also contained such irregularity within safe confines by pictorialising it, evading any threatening or overwhelming emotion attributed to nature. As such it can be argued that the picturesque is a precarious category, straining to maintain a controlled relationship to nature, neither too neat and restricting nor excessive.

In accentuating variation in landscape, the picturesque de-emphasizes human figures within the pictorial frame. They are merely accessories; Gilpin argues that "if by bringing the figures forward on the foreground, you give room for character and expression, you put them out of place as appendages, for which they were intended" (*Three Essays* 77). James R. Ryan alludes to the functionary role of the figures of the picturesque, where "a carefully posed figure" is used to "draw the viewer's gaze into the image" (49). The inhabitants serve two purposes, becoming a mere tool by which the viewer's gaze can come into effect, as well as "picturesque figures for graphic charm and scale rather than as individuals in their own right" (Ryan 51). The human figures are entirely subordinated to the pictorial rendering of landscape. Ryan suggests that the inclusion of the natives into the picturesque depends upon their "total acquiescence" (52)

to the aesthetic of the artist, the local inhabitants absorbed into the landscape which envelops them. As Gilpin adds, "In a moral view, the industrious mechanic is a more pleasing object than the loitering peasant. But in a picturesque light, it is otherwise."[117]

Such a picturesque framework which constructs the observer as a privileged individual who views a coherent world from a vantage point of knowledge is reminiscent of classic realism, as Catherine Belsey describes it in *Critical Practice*. Drawing upon the Marxist Louis Althusser's concept of ideology, Belsey notes that "classic realism," a mode of representation which is historically coincident with the capitalist mode of production, invokes upon a "unified, autonomous, subjectivity" which, as a bourgeois strategy, erases the dehumanizing conditions of capitalism under the rubric of "realism":

> Classic realism, still the dominant, popular mode in literature, film and television drama, roughly coincides chronologically with the epoch of industrial capitalism. It performs, I wish to suggest, the work of ideology, not only in its representation of a world of consistent subjects who are the origin of meaning, knowledge, and action, but also in offering the reader, as the position from which the text is most readily intelligible, the position of subject as the origin both of understanding and of action in accordance with that understanding. (62)

Arguing that classic realism interpellates the reader as "a transcendent and non contradictory subject"(71), where autonomous subjectivity is represented as the "obvious" choice, Belsey notes that the "reader is invited to perceive and judge the 'truth' of the text, the coherent, non contradictory interpretation of the world as it is perceived

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[117] Quoted by Malcolm Andrews, 25.

by an author whose autonomy is the source and evidence of the truth of the interpretation"(63). As such, classic realism "constitutes an ideological practice in addressing itself to readers as subjects, interpellating them in order that they freely accept their subjectivity and their subjection"(64).

Belsey observes that classic realism is characterized by "*illusionism*, narrative which leads to *closure*, and *a hierarchy of voices* which establishes the 'truth' of the story"(64). She reads closure as the "re-establishment of order" by which dominant values are normalized, "recognizable as a reinstatement or a development of the order which is understood to have preceded the events of the story itself"(65). As such, heterogeneity is "contained in homogeneity" (71), confirming the autonomy of the reader as well as the autonomous positioning of the reader in a stable social context, obliterating the fact that individual subjects are socially and historically constructed. Hence, classic realism constructs a unified narrative, attempting to efface its own textuality.

Such ideological work is apparent in the way the picturesque functions, in the manner in which the picturesque framework too reassures the observer of his own control of his subjectivity as well as his socio-cultural context, concealing his own functionary role in a capitalist system. A picturesque gaze demands that the spectator is detached from the object they observe, "a particular way of picturing and imaginatively appropriating space by a detached, individual spectator"(Ryan 46). The picturesque attempts to inscribe a supposed transparent world of nature by depoliticizing landscape, in which a "'cottage, mill or hamlet among trees, may add beauty to a rural scene,' but too many dwellings and indications of 'industry' would spoil the picturesque beauty"

(Sampson 90).[118] It is a concept whereby "travelers began to inscribe the concept of disinterested contemplation on the landscape through scenic tourism" (Bohls 48). Gary D. Sampson argues that such conventions do not "allow for a serious social or cultural discourse, but rather foster an emotive vision that would seem to have no connection with present day political realities," realities which would have impacted the colonized in a colonial setting (90).

In fact, the picturesque aesthetic can be read as Eurocentric in its origin and practice. Clyde Taylor in *The Masks of Art* discusses the congruence of aestheticism with Eurocentricism and racism. He exposes the category of the "aesthetic" as a tool of Eurocentric ideology, tracing it back to the period of Enlightenment in Europe, when European civilizations and critical methods were universalized and standardized. Identifying a link between aesthetics and European racism, and the language of aesthetics and the language of Whiteness, Taylor critiques the Eurocentric gaze which has devalorized a non-European aesthetics. He comments that the "license taken by the Euro-humanist art-culture system to seize the world's objects from their original contexts and contort them to the gaze of the bourgeois connoisseur is one of the more exploitative functions of the aesthetic"(49). He argues that the "aesthetic played a major role in the narration of transcendent Whiteness and an indispensable role in the development of modern, pseudo-scientific racism"(26).

Noting that an aesthetic gaze is an "ethnic" and "class-bounded" gaze, Taylor argues that "not only is the aesthetic an ideology, it gives crucial support to general ideological stability"(14). Revealing the invention of a "White aesthetic," which in turn

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[118] Gary D. Sampson quotes Malcolm Andrews quoting Gilpin, in "Unmasking the Colonial Picturesque: Samuel Bourne's Photographs of Barrackpore Park" in Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and

denies the validity of a black aesthetic, Taylor argues that the aesthetic was "the means by which the Occidental middle class capitalized its hierarchy of values over all others and attempted to designate all present and future cultural practices as weaker variations of its own"(60). Referring to the "unequal distribution of signifying power," Taylor reveals how the aesthetic develops and extends its dominance over other cultures by assuming the centrality of a white bourgeois subject. As such, the apparent "disinterestedness" of the aesthetic gaze veils the animalization and dehumanization of blackness, a violence which serves the interests of a white supremacy.

Likewise, the construction of the picturesque aesthetic is an apt site to unveil Eurocentricism at work, one which is well suited to a colonial context. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside have argued that the picturesque has acquisitive connotations, and that "the discourse of the picturesque intersects with and is shaped by the discourses of colonialism"(6). Picturesque portrayals of landscape and monuments of significance were important in colonial photography, and the "very idea of Empire depended in part on an idea of landscape, as both controlled space and the means of representing such control, on a global scale"(Ryan 46). Such an ideal serves imperialism. As W. J. T. Mitchell points out, the discourse of imperialism "conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of 'culture' and 'civilization' into a 'natural' space in a progress that is itself narrated as 'natural'"(17). As such, it is also a framework that masks racism. As Sampson argues, the picturesque "may at once suppress associations of racial confrontation, cultural assimilation, and radical topographical alteration, and thus serve the purposes of empire by affirming the colonized site as an emblem of

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Place, 90.

political authority and racial dominance"(84).

Hence the picturesque emerges as a class bound, culturally and racially inflected discourse, at odds with the rhetoric of disinterestedness and objectivity generally attributed to the form. An examination of the interplay between Eurocentric ideology, and the picturesque in the representations of Ceylon is necessary in order to unravel how the picturesque functions in Ceylon, as well as how the picturesque can be viewed as a contentious discourse, in the construction of "Ceylon."

Picturesque Ceylon: The Ordering of the Landscape

Keeping in mind the ideological implications of the picturesque, I will now turn to an examination of how the picturesque may be inscribed in representations of Ceylon. During the mid nineteenth century, Ceylon was seen as a viable site for imperial and capitalist interests, thus necessitating its promotion as an aesthetically pleasing space. James Tennent's two volume description of the natural, religious and political history of the island in *Ceylon: An Account of the Island, Physical, Historical and Topographical with Notices of its Natural History, Antiquities and Productions* (1859) illustrates this well. It reveals how Ceylon is depicted according to such a picturesque framework, cast in aesthetic vocabulary, organized into a pictorial view.

With a series of engravings by a number of artists at the time such as Andrew Nicholl (1804-86) and Hippolyte Silvaf (1801-79), Tennent's text especially focuses on the beauty of the landscape, the ancient ruins of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, and other archaeological and scenic sites. Ceylon is constructed as a cornucopia, or an Edenic space, a space which is noted for its physical beauty. He begins his

comprehensive account of the land with a picturesque description:

> Ceylon from whatever direction it is approached, unfolds a scene of loveliness and grandeur unsurpassed, if it be rivalled by any land in the universe. The traveler from Bengal, leaving behind the melancholy delta of the Ganges and the torrid coast of Coromandel; or the adventurer from Europe, recently inured to the sands of Egypt and the scorched headlands of Arabia, is alike entranced by the vision of beauty which expands before him as the island rises from the sea, its lofty mountains covered by luxuriant forests, and its shores, till they meet the ripple of the waves, bright with the foliage of perpetual spring. (3)

A picturesque gaze enables Tennent to visualize Ceylon as a portrait which reveals itself to the traveler as an ideal composition. The island "rises from the sea" and mesmerizes the viewer into submission. Such a gradual and progressive unfolding of space clearly keeps with the picturesque conventions illustrated by Gilpin. Reminiscent of a tourist brochure holding out a promise which is beyond the imagination of the observer, Tennent constructs Ceylon as a gratifying site, with limitless potential for the fulfillment of fantasy. With its lush and exotic vegetation, it is a domain of natural abundance that contrasts with other races and civilizations. Incomparable, it is cast as a landscape of desire, a space to be aesthetically appropriated.[119] Emptied of meaning, Ceylon is a sign promising fulfillment of a lack encountered elsewhere.

The fulfillment available in Ceylon is mainly expressed in terms of natural imagery. For instance, Ceylon is bounded and encased, reduced to a site of scenic

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[119] Even early accounts of Ceylon, beginning from Ptolemy, the Greek geographer, refer to the natural riches of the island.

attraction and rustic tranquility, a product of a painter's imagination, in his vividly narrated first impressions of Galle:

> No traveler fresh from Europe will ever part with the impression left by his first gaze upon tropical scenery, as it is displayed in the bay and the wooded hills that encircle it; for, although Galle is surpassed both in grandeur and beauty by places afterwards seen in the island, still the feeling of admiration and wonder called forth by its loveliness remains vivid and unimpaired. If, as is frequently the case, the ship approaches the land at daybreak, the view recalls, but in an intensified degree, the emotions excited in childhood by the slow rising of the curtain in a darkened theatre to disclose some magical triumph of the painter's fancy, in all the luxury of colouring and all the glory of light. The sea, blue as sapphire, breaks upon the fortified rocks which form the entrance to the harbour; the headlands are bright with verdure; and the yellow strand is shaded by palm-trees that incline towards the sea, and bend their crowns above the water. The shore is gemmed with flowers, the hills behind are draped with forests of perennial green; and far in the distance rises the zone of purple hills, above which towers the sacred mountain of Adam's Peak, with its summit enveloped in clouds. (Tennent 99)

Ceylon is visualized on a canvas evocative of picturesque conventions, with a clear foreground consisting of palm trees, a well lit middle distance revealing the hills and the forests, and a background illuminating the mountains of Adam's Peak.[120] A picturesque

[120] See Malcolm Andrews for an elaborate description of picturesque conventions. p.29.

aesthetic also emerges when Tennent casts the scene in the vocabulary of stage design.[121] He equates his experience of seeing Ceylon with that of viewing a play, staging the scenic sights. Ceylon becomes an imperial space of display and arouses childlike wonderment in Tennent, when the "slow rising of the curtain" "discloses" the pictorial scene ahead. The viewer's gaze is made to rest on the palette of colors nature has attributed to Ceylon, foregrounded by the palm trees which act as the picturesque side screens or the *repoussoir*. The viewer gains access to the spectacle in the intimacy of the "darkened theatre" when the curtain reveals the finished artifact in the form of picturesque Ceylon.

Tennent, as the observer, seeks shelter behind the screen provided by the trees, and frames Ceylon as a canvas. The diverse natural features are contained within the composition, and Tennent provides Ceylon with a coherent ideological frame through which the island can be described. But what is critical is that the picturesque framework attempts to unsuccessfully mask his commercial interest in Ceylon. For instance, immediately after describing Galle, Tennent observes:

> But the interest of the place is not confined to the mere loveliness of its scenery. Galle is by far the most venerable emporium of foreign trade, now existing in the universe; it was the resort of merchant ships at the earliest dawn of commerce, and it is destined to be the centre to which will hereafter converge all the rays of navigation, intersecting the Indian Ocean, and connecting the races of Europe and Asia. (99, V.2)

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[121] Malcolm Andrews notes that the "descriptive vocabulary of the picturesque tourist, with his talk of 'side screens', 'off-skips' and select distances" was associated with the terminology used for "stage design" (29).

While the picturesque aesthetic obscures imperial trade and economic activities, Tennent's celebration of Galle for its beauty is unable to conceal the advantages of Galle as a hub of trade. As expected, a picturesque vision of Ceylon is bound to the new economic vision for the island during the middle of the nineteenth century when the British government aimed at instilling Ceylon with a spirit of economic enterprise.

Such a picturesque sensibility expressed in his work is connected to his duties as a colonial administrator in Ceylon. As a colonial servant of the British Empire, appointed to the position of Colonial Secretary in the government in Ceylon in 1845, Tennent is the ideal candidate to gather and collate the physical, historical and topographical features of Ceylon in two volumes in 1859. In his introduction, he specifically states that his intention in carving out the text is because of the "dearth of information regarding its state and progress during more recent periods, and its actual condition" (xix) of the time. Referring to many new developments of the period including the British Enterprise of 1815, where the British conquered the Kandyan Kingdom in the interior of Ceylon and thus came to govern the whole of the island, the British involvement in the cinnamon trade and the introduction of coffee cultivation, Tennent sees the need for a new record and acknowledgements of these British colonial projects. He states that "[i]n the course of less than half a century, the aspect of the country became changed, the condition of the people submitted to new influences; and the time arrived to note the effects of this civil revolution"(xxi).

At a time of rapid change in the social economy of the island, when coffee cultivation was at its height, the picturesque gaze facilitates his textual reproduction of the natural, political and social history of Ceylon. But what is significant is how he

banishes sights of tension and recasts Ceylon as an appealing site for colonial investment.[122] After the consolidation of British rule in Ceylon in 1815, the British gradually viewed Ceylon as an economic asset more than as a strategic placement in the Indian Ocean. It was during this time that the British transformed Ceylon into a plantation economy with the introduction of coffee and cinnamon cultivation. But 1846 provided another violent landmark in Ceylonese history when the great depression in England resulted in the colonial government imposing obnoxious taxes on the peasants. The outcome was the Great Rebellion of peasants in 1848 in the central highlands of Ceylon.[123] Given the political and economic tension and the occasional violence that came to define colonial relations between the native Ceylonese and the British government during the nineteenth century, the picturesque sensibility provides Tennent an idyllic mode through which to enter a descriptive narrative of Ceylon.

Thus, in this instance, the picturesque functions so as to mask the violence inflicted on the Ceylonese community by colonial rule. The picturesque aesthetic helps him appropriate Ceylon as a contained but potent environment which is suitable for white occupancy and dominance. Yet, at the same time, the picturesque is also evocative of the violence inflicted on the terrain of Ceylon, revealing Tennent's failure to frame and thereby contain the scene ahead.

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[122] Robin Jones notes that the most serious problem James Tennent faced as the Colonial Secretary of Ceylon was in 1848, "with the outbreak of a small-scale rebellion, concentrated in the central highlands of the island, or Kandyan Districts, provoked by the administration's recently imposed tax rise on the island's population. This rebellion and its heavy-handed suppression led to Tennent's recall to London in 1850, where he faced a parliamentary committee of enquiry into the events of 1848" (1).

[123] 1848 is also a significant year in Europe with a string of revolutions in France, Italy, Germany, Austria,-Hungary. These revolutions were a result of a wide variety of causes such as technological change

Sightseeing Ceylon: Constance Gordon Cumming's Picturesque Albums

While James Tennent's text illustrates a picturesque aesthetic predicated on dominant colonial and imperial economic imperatives, the picturesque provides Constance Gordon Cumming a means through which to merge European pictorial as well as ideological conventions into an alien landscape. Cumming's text titled *Two Happy Years in Ceylon* (1892), documents her two year stay in Ceylon, and her various travels across the country seeking sights and sounds of Ceylon.

Her first encounter with Ceylon is through the letters of her brother John stationed in Ceylon as a planter in a cocoa-nut plantation who later distinguishes himself as a hunter while supervising the forests. Extracts of his letters, referred to in the preface to Cumming's travelogue, recount his various adventures, one time describing "the rejoicing of the villagers over slaughter, by their white friend, of twenty five leopards"(2). He constructs Ceylon as a site of dense and luxuriance vegetation in which tons of lurking wild beasts can be easily conquered, in order to create a non threatening social frame of Ceylon. It is a vision Cumming reproduces when she does visit Ceylon. She initially presents Ceylon through a series of picturesque paintings. In her introduction, she describes how three hundred of her watercolor paintings from various parts of the empire were exhibited in the Indian and Colonial Exhibition at South Kensington, and at exhibitions in Liverpool and Glasgow. Of these, sixty scenes were of Ceylon, which were created on the "principle of 'never a day without at least one careful colored sketch'"(5). Her picturesque gaze on Ceylon is apparent when she notes how she had accumulated her sketches:

> I wandered in every direction- north, south, east and west- basking on the

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and concepts such as liberalism and socialism. For more, see Charles Breunig.

> yellow sands of most fascinating palm-fringed sea-coast, or gliding over calm rivers-gipsying among ruins of mighty pre-Christian cities in the depths of lonely forests, or awaiting the sunrise on lofty mountain-summits, studies of exquisite foliage or of strange Buddhist and Tamil shrines, and all enlivened to memory by the recollection of picturesque groups of brown men, women, and children of diverse race and varied hue, some scantily draped, others gorgeously appareled, but all alike harmonious in colour. (5)

Cumming constructs Ceylon as a tamed spectacle with its central ingredients of lush foliage, calm rivers, jutting mountains and people who blend in with the scenery. These pictures are free standing accounts of Ceylon, when she adds that they have "helped [friendly critics] to realize something of the true character and beauty of Ceylonese scenery" (5). Her assertion of the reality of the watercolor paintings, and their visual truthfulness is obvious when her two-volume travelogue of her two-year stay in Ceylon is presented as an extension to her sketches of Ceylon. She is asked to "supplement the brush with the pen, and tell the readers who have so kindly received my notes of travel in other lands something of my own impressions of Ceylon" (5). Hence she sits "surrounded with diaries and letters, travel-notes and sketch books innumerable, and portfolios in which each page recall some day of deep interest and many of delight"(5). The sketches become paradigmatic of Ceylon itself, setting the stage for the perception of Ceylon in the minds of her British audience, when she confirms and reinforces the Ceylonese landscape's conformity to the picturesque.

A good example of this pictorial display is *The Church at Nuwara Eliya* (1892),

which depicts a church nestled in lush and overgrown landscape, surrounded by a range of mountains (fig. 10). The church is nearly encroached by the wilderness, and the picture is clearly divided into three planes, with a foreground, a lightly lit middle distance, and a background. The foreground depicts dense foliage and vegetation, where several trees frame both sides of the canvas. In the middle, a foot path is visible through which a family of peasants heads towards the church. Their positioning directs the viewer's gaze towards the background of the canvas, which is the focal point of the painting. The church which is partially hidden from the observers, where the wilderness encroaches upon its gables, comes into view. Clouds swirl in the distance, through which a picturesque valley is visible.

The peasants, a man and a woman with two children, who act as the lead-in figures for the picturesque gaze of the beholder, are certainly subordinated to the composition. They are hardly visible on the canvas, the man dressed in a sarong, his chest bare, while the woman seems to be dressed in similar attire although her upper body is covered. They merely facilitate the imperial gaze, without occupying a central position in the portrait. On the one hand, they are a tool by which the picturesque eye is led into the composition which is carefully staged, framed and controlled. The distant figures are a contraption to lead the picturesque gaze into vast expanse of territory laid before the colonizer. On the other hand, they provide a sense of the scale of the landscape the picture attempts to capture. The result is that the peasant family blends harmoniously into the landscape, the imperial venture domesticated and constructed as one of mastery and absolute control devoid of local tensions.[124]

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[124] In many representations of Ceylonese landscape, the native is constructed as subordinate to the environment. Sydney D. Bailey quotes Bishop Heber declaring that, "every prospect pleases/ And only man

Fig.10. Cumming, Constance Gordon. The Church at Nuwara Eliya. Two Happy Years in Ceylon. Constance Gordon Cumming. Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1892.185.

This image does not allow for any resistance to conventions of the picturesque, except for the insertion of a lone and massive tree towards the center of the frame which introduces slight dissonance into the composition. It does not stand in for a picturesque side screen when it is situated towards the center of the composition, creating a sense of disjunction in the image. On the gravel path, this tree towers over the entire area, diminishing all other trees nearby by its sheer breadth and height, its branches spreading across. However, it still does not interfere with the focus of the painting when it helps

is vile"(9) producing the Ceylonese as inferior, operating within contemporary discourses of orientalism. But while Heber had a moralistic purpose, wanting to demonstrate that Christian missionary work was necessary to save the colonized, such imaginings are consistent throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, carrying across to James Joyce in Ulysses when he makes a similar reference in 1936. Joyce's casual reference to "the far East" as a "Lovely spot it must be: the garden of the world, big lazy leaves to float about on, cactuses, flowery meads, snaky lianas...Those Cinghalese lobbing around in the sun, in dolce far niente,"(64) certainly emphasizes the tropicalised and exoticised Ceylon, the indolent native immersed in a lush setting, merely repeating the sentiments of many British writers at the time who

frame the church and its immediate surroundings. By positioning it beside the gravel path which leads towards the church, the tree leads the viewer towards the heart of the composition. It invites the viewer to gaze at the surrounding and survey the land around, where the observer can assume a distanced and supposedly rational perspective.

The ideological underpinnings of the image become clear when the naturalness of Christianity in a colonial landscape is conveyed through the painting. The church, though overwhelmed by the landscape, nevertheless stands secure and confident. The abundant landscape offers the prospect of settlement for the colonizer, which is indicated through a group of natives who are faintly depicted to the extreme right of the canvas. They are gathered in front of the church, dressed seemingly in white, their heads covered, and in the midst stands a European, indicated by his/her lightened skin color. Just next to the flock of devotees, a cross is displayed. Christianity not only embraces its followers but also proves promising for potential believers such as the peasants who head in the direction of the church. The picturesque, romantic landscape is unspoiled by the introduction of a Christian church. If at all, the grandeur of the scene is heightened by the alien structure.

Cumming literally arranges the landscape into a picturesque composition, and depicts the life of the colonized as idyllic, wiping out the sociopolitical affects of colonization. Elizabeth Bohls, in her discussion of the picturesque, argues that picturesque tourism "de-particularizes the aesthetic object in order to assert the subject's distance from those social groups associated with senses and their disorderly desires; the laboring classes and women" (95). According to Bohls, the manner in which the picturesque gaze notes its disinterestedness is "in its refusal to recognize, in looking at

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conceives of colonial Ceylon in similar terms.

land, the ways the topography of a specific place reflects the material needs of its inhabitants, the people living on and from it" (95). Thus the Church, as a symbol of British colonial expansion, is smoothly integrated into the tropical environment of Ceylon, and the people are reduced to indigenous converts who flock around the church or peasants who do not find its presence invasive. In fact, by visualizing a peasant family, Cumming grounds Christianity in domesticity and the family, and attempts to articulate a positive role of empire. She ignores the profound cultural consequences of Christianization and effects of uneven power relations of colonialism on the Ceylonese, and naturalizes controversial religious issues.

Likewise, just as a shifting religious and political landscape in Ceylon is connected to a picturesque sensibility in *The Church at Nuwara Eliya*, Cumming appreciates the natural landscape in her travelogue but is largely uncritical of the social, economic and political landscape which constructs poverty for the very villagers she romanticizes. Ceylon lives up to the picturesque expectations of her audience when she states that the villagers' "homes seem to be the perfection of village life": "rich picturesque bamboo hut, with its thatch of coca-nut leaves, wholly concealed from its neighbours by the richest vegetation, and buried in cool shade of large-leaved plantains and bread-fruit trees; while above each little homestead waves the beneficient tree which supplies the family with meat and drink, and a thousand things besides"(42).

Thus, in her picturesque sketches as well as her travelogue, Ceylon is depicted as a land of uncontested ground. This perhaps relates to her gendered positioning as a female traveler in the colony. As a prolific travel writer and landscape painter, Cumming was often criticized for traveling alone and unaided, and the picturesque is perhaps a

means to negotiate her position within colonial cultures. The picturesque aesthetic provided a convenient trope for female artists who were caught in the conflict where they were entitled by race and class but not by gender, to the authority of colonial subject. In this instance, it allows Cumming to appropriate the landscape and portray such an act as genteel within the prescriptions of patriarchal authority.[125]

Refashioning Ceylon: Carolyn Corner's Gendered Visions

While both James Tennent and Constance Gordon Cumming utilize the picturesque to participate in fashioning a colonial society, Carolyn Corner offers quite pointed resistance to the aesthetic in an attempt to contest hitherto stereotypical imaginings of Ceylon. Corner situates Ceylon as a site of resistance to the picturesque ideology in her fictional rendering of her travels in *Ceylon: The Paradise of Adam* (1908). The picturesque is disrupted by Corner mainly in order to construct a critique of male colonial conduct in Ceylon. Corner, through her protagonist Cynthia, traces Cynthia's journey from a newcomer to Ceylon to a perceptive woman critical of imperial rule.

Cynthia cannot be the picturesque tourist of Ceylon who idealizes the landscape. Though she at first romanticizes the landscape, seemingly stereotypical picturesque constructions of Ceylon cannot be sustained by her gaze. Upon her arrival in Ceylon, she "found herself seated on the verandah of her new home, an idyllic home as far as

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[125] Gary D. Sampson refers to Ann Birmingham's discussion, that the picturesque, as theorized by Gilpin and his contemporaries, is "a mode of reading nature's charm as distinctly feminine, as one might gaze at a woman, who attends to her dress, to accentuate the sensual"(100). Sampson notes that picturesque landscape is "essentialized as 'all pretty surface,' in contrast to 'the profound depth' of masculinity"(100). As such, the picturesque suits women travelers and artists as it allows them to negotiate a "feminized" territory with pleasure and ease, examining "the appearances of things without necessarily seeking their

appearances go," and asks, "can ordinary mortals live ordinary lives in such abodes, amid such surroundings?"(1). She equates her Ceylonese home to a "Grecian temple set up in the Garden of Eden" where all "nature was asleep- slumbering in a golden bath" (1-2). Yet she becomes critical of her own idealistic constructions when the narcotic atmosphere is attributed to her exhaustion and lethargy. She comments on "the heat-laden atmosphere" of Ceylon and states, "[h]eavy with the scent of tropical blooms in profusion-the orange, the myrtle, the passion flower, rat mal and areca, the air seemed to be possessed of narcotic properties or was it merely fatigue that overcame and caused her to feel drowsy?" (2).

Cynthia's surveillance of the landscape from the vantage point of the verandah is interrupted through the figure of the Bird of Paradise, who does not act as a lead-in figure, and refuses to provide a convenient stand-in for the beholder's gaze. The bird shatters any illusions of the picturesque serenity of Ceylon and intervenes in Cynthia's initial conceptions of Ceylon. He refuses to frame the picturesque by becoming a passive source of inspiration for the idyllic setting. Instead the bird is a participant in the exchange of ideas with Cynthia herself, which is clearly illustrated through the allegorical dialogue between Cynthia, as representative of the colonizer and the Bird of Paradise as representative of the colonized at the beginning of the text. Cynthia's reverie of her idyllic surroundings in Ceylon is hindered by the Bird of Paradise who mocks Cynthia: "A newcomer, eh? Enraptured with our lovely isle, I'll warrant, already. A contrast, certainly to your foggy London and its dirty sparrows. Bah!"(3). But though Ceylon is initially a desirable site of travel for Cynthia as the bird observes, he is also quick to point out the very limitations of that divine place. The Bird comments on the mosquitoes

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cause or meaning" (Birmingham 85). For a more extensive discussion, see Ann Birmingham, 81-119.

whose bite stings, and states "it's not all bliss even in paradise, you'll find out if you stay long enough"(4).

The bird is hardly subsidiary in this text. The Ceylonese perspective comes out through the allegorical bird of Paradise, when the bird points to tensions between the English and the Ceylonese. He says, "Ah! You didn't know we could talk and are given to discussing your affairs? There's something yet to learn. Perhaps even we of the jungle could teach you something, if you gave us the opportunity. We could talk you over as you say, and sometimes terminate the discussion with a vote of censure on some of your ways"(3). Hence, the Bird of Paradise constructs a disturbing space between Cynthia and the Ceylonese landscape. The bird symbolizes not only the colonized Ceylonese, but also the incomprehensibility of the landscape. The bird is elusive when he disappears soon afterwards and even ominous when he cannot be detected at the end when Cynthia is about to leave. Hardly signifying a picturesque side screen, the Bird refuses to provide refuge for the observer. Instead, he becomes a disturbing reminder to the English viewers of the dynamism of the so called motionless paradisical isle.

Ceylon cannot be viewed in a picturesque light when the Bird of Paradise opens up the issue of gender politics in the colony. Eve's marginality in the construction of paradise, as noted by both Cynthia and the bird, problematises the notion of an idyllic Ceylon. The Bird of Paradise states that Adam "parted from Eve on the Plains of Mesopotamia prior to his banishment to Ceylon, the Paradise of Adam"(4) and declares, "Poor Eve-no Adam-no Eve. What Paradise!"(4). Therefore, without Eve, the Ceylonese paradise is incomplete. As Cynthia notes, "paradise-the Paradise of Adam...what of Eve?"(5). The negation of Eve's significance leaves Cynthia with a concern for female

autonomy herself as a white woman traveler in the colony.

In fact, Cynthia's gendered status as a white woman in the colony is articulated from the very beginning in order to unravel and contest the discourses surrounding her position as the female traveler/resident in the isle. Reminiscent of Knighton's dismissal of the female gaze, the epithet at the beginning of Corner's text, just before the title, taken from a Spanish proverb reads, "Travellers and inquisitive women see strange sights." The male imperial body politic considered the female gaze as peripheral to the imperial project and women writers were neglected, stereotyped, and caricatured. Victorian women travelers were viewed as "oddities, eccentric 'globetrotteresses' with little to contribute to scientific and geographical knowledge"(McEwan 4). Corner questions such readings when she attempts to legitimate her own vision of Ceylon, and launch a critique against her male contemporaries.

While Knighton constructs the female gaze as inept, Corner constructs Ceylon as a site where the white woman's gaze is thwarted. Cynthia is subject to surveillance and restrictions by white men. As a white woman settler in the colonies, she is required to observe colonial rules and conventions against which she rebels. Her husband, as a representative of patriarchal society, instructs her that she must not question the "custom of the country"(12). Yet Cynthia, being far too intelligent, witty and independent-minded, rejects these prescriptions as her "broad mind rebelled at restrictions"(13). Corner states that on "Cynthia's skull there was a bump, not of inquisitiveness, but of love of adventure"(13). In fact it is her curiosity and enthusiasm which distinguishes her in the text.

As such, Cynthia cannot construct the Ceylonese landscape according to

picturesque formulae because of her limited viewing positions as a woman. Yet this does not mean that she cannot exert a feminine gaze of her own. She in fact takes pleasure in her gaze, and does not seek the validity of her male counterparts when she defies their commands. Led by such a willful spirit, she delights in her ability to observe and share in Ceylonese life. She ventures out into the villages, but her unconventional attitude is deemed deviant by many, especially when she rides unaccompanied outside her compound, beyond the acceptable confines of imperial life, except for the company of her dog. She is met by stares of the whites, who perhaps wondered "where had she been? What business could a European have, a gentle woman too, beyond the prescribed limitations of the Park or Galle Face Drive"(19). Later, Cynthia is subject to the stares of the natives as well as the Europeans when they find her alone on foot in the streets of Ceylon.

But while Ceylonese men are curious and "pause to inquire of the Appoo the reason for a European lady being about at that hour and on foot"(186), it is the Europeans who are in fact critical of her behavior: "How they looked at Cynthia! Some-and these the best bred, those really high in the social scale-raised their hats; others stared, and if they had their wives and daughters with them, the latter made some sneering remark which, however, the husband, to his credit, be it said did not encourage, but flicking the horse hastened on" (187). Yet it is not only her behavior that draws their attention. Her dress too is subject to scrutiny: "Maybe 'twas the pretty tea-gown that excited envy or derision –which? But what more suitable when the thermometer stands at 110 than a loose muslin robe?" (187). Critical of such policing, Cynthia distances herself from the stiff officialdom of colonial rule and immerses herself in the life of Ceylon. She contests

British notions of gender appropriate behavior by questioning the Western perceptions of the female traveler in the colonies.

Cynthia is uninterested in wielding a picturesque gaze when she acknowledges native subjectivity. The native men and women are not diffused onto the pictorial surface, lost within the landscape of Ceylon. In fact, the native figures on the Ceylonese landscape prove equally disturbing for the British colonials. Critical of the false sense of superiority of the British, she inserts native figures into her composition in order to defy a picturesque gaze. Cynthia questions the myth of the indolent, and reticent Sinhalese native, and exposes European arrogance in interpreting the native's calm demeanor as stupid. She observes that "[t]he Asiatic-particularly the Sinhalese-is reticent, because he is suspicious of the European, deeming his interest"(20). She refutes the idea that the oriental is stupid and lazy:

> A study, an intensely interesting study, is the Oriental, a product of the ages, of the soft sunlit scenery, of the physically enervating yet thought-inspiring clime. He meditates asquat on his heels for hours, his eyes gazing far away, into infinity apparently. The European looking on him thinks him stupid, bovine. Is he? All the while thoughts are animating his subtle mind, a reservoir too deep for the average European to fathom, with all his "cram". But the European of reflective tendency is speedily caught in the mental magnetism of the East. And then comes the fascination. (322)

What is significant is how the native's gaze challenges a pictorial attitude to land. The native Sinhalese does not join in the gaze of the European and share in the western

appropriation of the landscape but constructs an alternative visual space when "his eyes [gaze] far away, into infinity apparently." It is a space which retreats away from the viewer, outside of their visual field. Hence the picturesque cannot be managed by the outsider when the native figures do not help the viewer to systematically move from foreground to distance. Instead, the viewer is led through to a space which, according to Corner, he cannot ascertain.

Corner not only empathizes with the native perspective but also grants voice to the native. She questions Bishop Heber's lines, that in Ceylon, "where every prospect pleases/only man is vile"(187). Cynthia ponders "if, when Bishop Heber wrote these lines...they were intended to apply to the 'heathen' native alone"(187). She draws on Kipling's statement that "East is East and West is West/ And Never the two will blend". She exclaims, "But no! the Oriental and the Occidental may meet, but never mingle. Their minds view things from different angles. To the European, the oriental way is the way of topsy turvydom; probably ours is to them"(320). She points out that "to adapt oneself is prudent-or try to. At all times and above all things not to carry one's hard and fast habits and customs and dogmatise to those who all the while are scarcely in doubt of one's sanity"(321). She ends by saying "for are there not always two sides to a question?"(321). Therefore, a simplistic picturesque appropriation of Ceylon by the European gaze is problematised by Corner through Cynthia, when the native Ceylonese cannot be subordinated to the landscape.

But while Ceylon is constructed as a problematic paradisical space for women such as Cynthia, Corner's text nevertheless reveals the contradictions inherent in the aesthetic appreciation and appropriation of the Ceylonese landscape. For instance, on

one occasion, Cynthia attends a devil-dance ceremony, a native ritual which the British seem reluctant to observe first hand. Cynthia is critical of the attitude of the British who make native life an aesthetic object, an artifact to appreciate and appropriate at a distance. The narrator states, the "miscellaneous ladies attending king's House might shudder with horror, Cynthia resolved on attending a *Yakkadura*-a genuine devil dance, not one got up on the verandah of a European's bungalow as a novel entertainment and excitement for the distinguished visitor and globe-trotter"(21). Corner relates Cynthia's delight in watching the ceremony, "irrespective of the 'customs of the country,' dictates of Mrs. Grundy, and all else besides save her Cynthia's own delight in having this chance of beholding one of the strangest and most interesting sights in the world"(21).

However, Cynthia's comment that "these primitive villages are teeming with interest, did the Europeans but know or care?"(19) and her search for the "primitive" and the "mental magnetism of the East" articulate a version of female modernism grounded in the feminine subversion of male structures. Although she distances herself from many others who commodify native life, where Ceylonese culture exists only on a stage, selected, arranged and exhibited to an audience, her desire to channel the "genuine" event seems anthropological. She states that "[h]ere was a chance of seeing for herself and learning the truth, a chance not to be missed" (21). Her valorization of the foreign as a source of excitement and inspiration classifies her gaze as exotic, and her search for an "authentic" Ceylon becomes an act of orientalist appropriation.[126] Although she sets her gaze apart from that of the picturesque tourist, she casts Ceylon as a site of spirituality when she declares that "oriental philosophy (not religion) is pure, unselfish, sublime" and

[126] For an elaborate discussion of the exotic, see Deborah Root.

that "every Oriental is a born philosopher"(321).

Even her critique of British attitudes as snobbish when she aligns with her Austrian connections instead of the British ones, falls short as she adopts a model of liberal humanism suggestive of E.M. Forster: "Now much of Cynthia's happy life had been spent among Austria's old nobility...The proud nobility of Austria are exclusive in the extreme-little changed from the age of feudalism...all the same the noble Austria does and may meet the mechanic, the peasant, with a freedom the unbending and often snobbish British would not dream of"(137). While Austria is perhaps less class-conscious, Cynthia nevertheless adopts a Euro-centric gaze, when she explores the issue of Britain's political control of Ceylon on a personal level: the British and the Ceylonese can coexist through friendship, good will and intelligence.

For Corner, the issue at stake is the proper conduct of the British in Ceylon, not necessarily the evils of colonial rule. Her reconceptualization of gender roles in Ceylon does not necessitate a wholesale rejection of British hegemony, which complicates her rejection of the picturesque gaze.[127] Therefore, her wish to recuperate a native voice through a feminist tone is problematic. While she hints at the political consequences of colonial rule in Ceylon, she nevertheless does not undermine Cynthia's ability to share in the colonial project and the travel that colonial rule provides. Though Cynthia is constructed as the "eccentric English girl," her solitary expeditions are facilitated through her position as the colonizing subject. Cynthia occupies the privileged position as a memsahib in Ceylonese colonial life because of her English identity. Although she is excluded from political and scientific discourses of the colony due to her gendered

[127] See De Mel and Samarakkody's discussion on Carolyn Corner and their argument that Corner "fails to point that this situation has its roots in the inequalities wrought by colonialism"(33).

position, she is able to validate her own gaze precisely because she is the wife of a British official in Ceylon.

This text provides a site for representing the complexities of the discourses of imperialism and gender. While Corner utilizes Cynthia to dismantle the picturesque gaze and visualize an alternative perspective of colonial Ceylon, the challenge Corner's text holds is minimized when it is unable to avoid some of the orientalist tropes.[128] While Corner refuses to adopt a pictorial attitude to Ceylon, Cynthia's aesthetic appreciation of difference cannot unmask the extent to which such an appreciation is based on unequal power relations in Ceylon. As Clyde Taylor remarks, a means by which a Eurocentric gaze begins to dominate other cultures through aesthetic theory is by assuming the position of a "universal valuing subject": "Non-western value systems are sampled to disguise the isolation of the aesthetic as a local, Western middle-class preoccupation" in order to "establish the relative inferiority of these non-Western societies" (19). Likewise Cynthia too cannot avoid the legacy of ethnocentricism in her aesthetic admiration of Ceylon.

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[128] A similar contradictory perspective can be found in Henriette Browne's paintings of the orient. See Reina Lewis's argument in Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation, that Browne's "sympathetic rendition of the harem theme challenges one set of artistic conventions (Orientalism) but reaffirms another (the codes of feminine art practice)"(162). Lewis observes that Browne's art is less erotic and objectifying because of her gendered status as female artist who are "agents whose mixture of observation and fantasy about the East is specifically gendered because of the social and psychological restraints on their experience and representation of the orient"(184). Yet a distance between the artist/viewer and the subject of the painting prevails. The boundaries between the western observer and the eastern objects cannot collapse as "the insistence on the difference between women (occidental and oriental) effectively marks the female spectator (both Browne and the painting's audience) as western and other to the female subjects of the painting"(165). Therefore Browne is a "seeing but a differentiating agent"(166).

Marianne North: Contestations of the Picturesque

While Corner questions the concept of the picturesque through which Ceylon is viewed, but is somewhat vulnerable to the exoticism which constructs the other as an aesthetic object, Marianne North's representation of the isle reflects issues of contestation and struggle inscribed on the picturesque plain of Ceylon.

A good example of this conflict is found in her painting of the *Bombay Pedlars on the verandah of Julia Margaret Cameron's house at Kalutara, Sri Lanka* (1876) (fig. 11).

Fig.11. North, Marianne. Bombay Pedlars on the Verandah of Julia Margaret Cameron's House at Kalutara, Sri Lanka. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Director and the Board of Trustees, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Drawn while visiting Julia Margaret Cameron in Ceylon, North's painting at first

glance seems picturesque. It depicts Cameron's house at Kalutara and its surroundings, and reveals a picturesque day in the colonies. The picturesque gaze is allowed entry into a scenic view through the three pedlars who are inserted on the threshold of the painting. They have arrived at Cameron's house perhaps in the hope of selling their wares to the colonial mistress. The three men sit, two facing the viewer while the other sits sideways, turning his back. They wear turbans and moustaches, and are dressed in robes that fully cover their body. They have placid expressions on their faces, and seem to have spread an assortment of goods, mostly several pieces of fabric of various colors, for sale. Other wares are spread across the mat on which they sit, of various hues and shades.[129]

The men serve as the "lead-in" figures of the composition, and guide the observer towards the glorious landscape ahead, the tropicalised setting against which native men and women are placed. The soft light at a distance leads the viewer's gaze into the tropical landscape, where the alluring sea and the bank across can be glimpsed in the distance. Several trees, mainly coconut and palm trees fill the banks just below Cameron's house. The sun comes into view as it reflects on a few palm trees and creates shadows of the figures occupying the scene. The columns of the house serve as picturesque side screens, standing in for the trees of the picturesque tradition that frames the portrait. These three columns of Cameron's house are visible to the right of the canvas, along with traces of the tiled roof above.

In between the three men and the abundant and lush landscape, is an aesthetically positioned figure to the left of the canvas, with the arms placed on both sides and legs forward. Amidst the colorful and luxuriant foliage to the left of the canvas, this darker

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[129] This painting bears a striking resemblance to one of Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs of a native group of merchants in front of her house, titled Group of Peddlers, Ceylon. See Julian Cox and Colin Ford,

skinned native, seemingly a woman, sits facing the green and the sea beyond, away from the three pedlars. With the back to the viewer, she is bare-chested and wears only a colorful red cloth which is held tied across the waist. Next to her is a medium-sized brick-red pot, perhaps a vessel for water, which blends with the cloth that the woman is dressed in. She also displays two hoop earrings, and seems to wear an armlet on one arm and bangles on the other.

North cannot construct a pictorial view of a quaint scene, when the woman's ambivalent position thwarts the picturesque aesthetic. On the one hand, the woman constructs an alternative space within the picturesque frame, placed between the foreground and background, occupying a transitional site. She is an awkward figure, an oddity on the canvas, resulting in a sense of disconnect in North's painting. While the three men construct a triangulated site, the wares on display neatly fitted within, the woman is removed from such a composition. Even the man who is partially turned sideways to the spectator still is a part of the composition in the middle. Yet the woman sits away and faces the sea beyond, creating a space of her own, a space that cuts across that of the pedlars, as well as that of the highlighted landscape. Her visual field extends beyond the frame, inaccessible to the viewer. She constructs her own subject position, opening up spaces to articulate her own subjectivity within the pictorial frame. Instead of providing scale for a pleasing composition, her positioning within the composition disrupts the picture, frustrating the viewers' gaze.

If native figures are usually marginalized within the picturesque, and are mere devices, in this instance, the woman is significant when she cannot be reduced to a mere figure of access. Instead of becoming an incidental figure who will emphasize the

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extensive landscape beyond, the viewers' eyes are contained within this figure to an extent, rather than extended over the landscape. This is underscored by the color scheme. Her dark, ebony-like skin and red cloth stand out against the plain white worn by the pedlars, and dominate the palette. Though colorful wares are spread in front of the pedlars, the woman's coloring stands out as distinct as it will not blend with such objects. She constructs a contrasting picture when the dark bare skin clashes with the bold white hoop earrings and the magenta red cloth.

However, on the other hand, she is also not a sovereign figure in the painting. It could be easily argued that her position forces the eye to move across the painting and into its depth; her head "leads" to the tree behind her which takes us into the landscape. Therefore she creates a second/alternative "lead-in"--one that is exotic in a different sense than the exotic represented by the merchants. The viewers are therefore left in an odd and disturbing place, where the figure is neither incidental nor autonomous. As the viewers cannot shield behind the female figure with ease in order to approach the desired site of focus in the composition, the picturesque framework becomes a fraught site.

Nor can the viewers readily access the figure because of the indeterminacy and ambiguity of the gendered identity of the native. She cannot be clearly discerned in terms of a gendered identity. The viewers cannot distinguish if the individual is in fact a woman or indeed a man. The slender structure of the figure adds to the confusion precisely because the image of fragility is usually reinforced in colonial descriptions of the Sinhalese male. Sinhalese men are often portrayed as slight and delicate, hence bringing about further confusion among the genders. The figure is very much reminiscent of the numerous effeminate portraits of Sinhalese men in colored

"petticoats." While the bare upper torso perhaps indicates that the native figure is a male, it still cannot unravel the ambiguity, as native women, especially women of the Rodiya caste, were pictured with bare upper bodies in Ceylon.[130] The vessel of water is perhaps an indication that the figure is a woman, as carrying and gathering water was a task set aside traditionally for Ceylonese women. The earrings, armlet, and bangles also point toward femininity. But even though it is seemingly a woman, though her face and figure are not very clear to the viewer, even the hair which is tied into a knot at the back is an ambivalent indication of femininity in Ceylon.

The ambiguously gender coded Ceylonese shuttles between two identities and refuses to be stabilised within the composition. She figures as a motif which thwarts the picturesque gaze of the beholder. North certainly utilizes the gender ambiguity to thwart the viewer who cannot fathom for certain if the figure is a man or a woman.

Therefore North produces a variant of the picturesque which challenges the conventional picturesque aesthetic. The ambivalence, where she shuttles between the conventional and its alternate expresses her own ambiguous position as a Victorian woman. She occupies an ambivalent position in Victorian society, as a woman who is of aristocratic upbringing but found Victorian domesticity oppressive and a hindrance to her desires.[131] Uninterested in the institution of marriage, she focused on her talent at drawing, which was acceptable as long as it was confined to an accomplishment. J.C.

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[130] See chapter one, Footnote 16.

[131] Of marriage Marianne North once wrote, "it is a terrible experiment...for a man especially as a woman is something like your cat and gets to love the person who feeds her and the house she lives in, but men, if they have brains, have a romantic idea of companionship in their wife and then discover they have no two ideas in common...I pity the poor wife too when she finds herself snubbed and a sort of a upper servant to be scolded if the pickles are not right and then she will have to amuse herself by flirting with the most brainless of the croquet-Badmintons"(Posonby 15). For more, see Laura Posonby.

Loudner writes in his *Gardeners Magazine*, "to be able to draw flowers botanically, and fruit horticulturally...is one of the most useful accomplishments of your ladies of leisure, living in the country"(Huxley 9).

As a collector and a naturalist, North certainly breaks free from the familiar gender prescriptions which deemed drawing acceptable as long as it was non-threatening. She utilizes her privileged upper-class position to freely access strange and exotic lands, and as a botanical painter, she predominantly paints flora and fauna in their native environments. But though she employs a botanical gaze when she chooses to draw plants and flowers with avid interest, she does engage in landscapes as well. She pictorialises it in such a way that emphasis is put on the flora and fauna which surround her. Consequently, the indigenous figures become marginalized to the botanical specimens.

Yet, she is also defined by her gendered status within the white patriarchal hierarchy, confined to conventions of gendered social behavior in the colonies. As such her Ceylonese print expresses her fraught subjectivity as a white woman in colonial Ceylon, who is also positioned as a colonizing subject. Her positioning explains the complexity of the picturesque aesthetic performed within the painting by North. In fact her own self awareness about the politics of the picturesque aesthetic is apparent in one of her own sketches which is a self-representation by North. Inserted in a letter sent to D. Alleman in 1883 in Seychelles, the sketch depicts North painting a botanical plant (fig. 12).

At first glance, it is a representation of a naturalist engaging in her work, where the natural landscape receives dominant focus. A palm tree is placed in the foreground, standing to the left of the frame. Heavily laden with fruit, the tree looms large and

gigantic to the observer, and in the distance, a tiny figure of a sketcher, presumably North is visible. She sits on top of a boulder 30 feet or higher, as she herself indicates in the letter, and is almost submerged in the leaves, hardly noticeable.

Fig.12. North, Marianne. Letter to Dr. Allman from Praslin, Seychelles, 1883. MarianneNorth Papers. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Director and the Board of Trustees, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

But once again, a struggle between oppositional subjectivities is obvious. Although North positions herself as significantly diminutive as opposed to the palm tree she visualizes on her canvas, and constructs herself so as to create a visual contrast with the plant, she is not subservient to the landscape. In fact, the position of the tree to the left of the canvas establishes a diagonal direction for the composition, directing the observer towards the artist. She is also predominant when the observer's eyes travel through the palm leaves on to the figure which is foreshadowed against the canvas. She

creates her own space within the spatial arrangement of the landscape; the scene behind her is hardly enticing when all you see are some boulders extending out of the frame, which further isolates North's position on the boulder and foregrounds her figure, exceeding her nominal function as complement to the view. In addition, a low perspective, usually found in picturesque work, is absent when the observer cannot situate himself on firm ground. He must imaginatively project himself into the air, when North's figure guides the observer to the top of the boulder. From such a high perspective, the power of the natural sights diminishes, and the palm tree becomes pale in comparison.

Hence in North, a competing aesthetic ideology is at work. The self-portrait of the naturalist is in dialectical competition with the landscape when North's self-representation attempts to privilege the figure of the naturalist over the landscape. Yet it is also apparent that just as North is poised precariously on top of the boulder, she is also poised uncomfortably between representational genres, caught between that which can be represented as picturesque and that which cannot, reflective of her own uneasy positionality in empire as a female botanical painter in Ceylon. It is in this context that we may place the Ceylonese print of North (fig. 11). Although her narrative is infused with detail about the natural environment of Ceylon, her Ceylonese image renders a different outlook when the native woman is not constructed as a simplistic "lead-in" figure contained within the composition. The woman figure is simultaneously accentuated and downplayed, and North's production of an alternate picturesque becomes a counter-display to the spectacle of the picturesque readily constructed and circulated of Ceylon.

Rupture and Disintegration: The Wounded Body on a Racial Landscape

The Monthly Literary Register and Notes and Queries for Ceylon (1893), an English magazine for the readers in Ceylon, printed and published by A.M. J. Ferguson at the Ceylon Observer Press, states its agenda in its very first issue. It is "interested in the history, literature, ethnology, antiquities, natural history, geology" etc of Ceylon. One of its first entries by an anonymous writer, the short story, "Denis: A Tale of Ceylon," is intriguing. It displays how the violence of colonial relations in Ceylon threatens to undo the authority of the picturesque vision. Though the narrator attempts to inscribe a picturesque eye on the landscape of Ceylon, Ceylon is simultaneously produced as a site of political and racial friction, interrogating picturesque constructions of the land. The landscape is a potent reminder of visceral concerns such as physical danger, illness, sensuality, and sexual contact. They shatter the serenity of the picturesque landscape and the picturesque aesthetic becomes a conflicting and contradictory force in Ceylon.

The short story tells the tale of Denis, a Ceylonese native who is a colonial servant in the household of the Chief-justice of Ceylon. When the Chief-Justice's young daughter is suddenly taken sick, Denis saves her life. Yet his employer fails to take that into consideration when Denis disobeys him regarding mounting one of his master's horses, and he is punished with lashings. Disillusioned, Denis leaves the establishment of his master and becomes a bandit, plundering caravans of dealers and merchants and distributing some of the spoils to the poor.

The Ceylonese landscape is cast in a picturesque light when the narrative opens, depicting the Chief-justice's wife and child, accompanied by a retinue of servants, who reach the rest house by boat where they are to meet the judge himself who is on

inspection to the north of Ceylon:

> It was on an evening the early part of 18-, that a boat was seen gliding along the shallow, silent waters of the old Dutch canal, which flows lazily from the stream called the Mahaoya towards Chilaw, on the west coast of Ceylon. It was what is termed a padda-boat-a sort of light traveling barge, roofed in with the dry leaves of the coconut palm, and roomy enough for chairs, a table and a couch; sufficient, indeed, for a small family. It was nearly sunset when the boat touched the sandy shore close to the Pablia resthouse, built for the accommodation of travelers in that wild country. Fastening the craft to the *tope* of bamboos growing at the water's edge, the turbaned Hindoo in charge of the party handed out a lady lightly clad, and after her a young child fast asleep, from the arms of its nurse or *ayah*. The little girl might have been about four years old: it was beautiful to see how tenderly and anxiously the great uncouth Indian took the sleeping infant from the trembling arms of the ayah, and placed it softly at the mother's feet, on a heap of mats, and shawls in the wide verandah of the bungalow. (16)

Ceylon is synonymous with pristine natural beauty when the arrival of the Judge's wife and child is described in pictorial terms. A boat on the Dutch canal, against a fading sunset forms a scenic background. The setting is indeed charming, with shallow streams, sandy shores, and bamboos growing at the water bank. The gliding boat from which the view is taken forms the foreground and provides the observer with a low viewpoint to access the scene. The plant specimens on the shore form a decorative border to centrally

position the boat, and the characters become figures in the landscape; the environment is pictured as serene and still.

While Ceylon is depicted as a site of plenitude, especially when the colonial party is welcomed by the villagers with gifts of fruits and flowers, along with milk and eggs, colonial relations between the Ceylonese and the British are seemingly idyllic at first, evident through the relationship between Denis and his colonial masters. The servants and villagers are concerned about the welfare of their employers and rally around the Judge's child who is taken sick, "for all loved that fair, young child, and each would have given his uttermost possession to have saved its life"(17). But Denis is more affected by the child's predicament: "one, more anxious than the rest, pressed forward with the license of an attached and favourite servant, and kneeling down, all hot and dusty as he was, fanned the sick girl with the broad leaf of a palmyrah"(17).

It is hardly surprising when Denis volunteers to bring back aid from Colombo for the ailing child. But what is significant is how he is cast as a figure in the landscape, removed from sociopolitical concerns of colonial Ceylon. He is introduced by the narrator not as agent, but as object, to be caught in nature. His plucky journey is described as such:

> More nimble than cheetah or fox, he sprang like a bird over a mossy rock, plunged through a dense copse of giant grass, and swept over the barren plain that stretched to the broad sluggish river, where the bamboos waved their fingery leaves. To plunge in and emerge on the opposite bank was the work of a minute: again he trod the grassy land, dashed over a hillock, and for a moment or two was lost in a short tope of palm-trees. Once more

> his lessening form was seen, still dashing onward; when, just as he approached a turn in the jungle, some dark form was seen to plunge upon his slender shoulders, and it appears as though he halted in his course: a shudder ran through the spectators; but none dared to exclaim, "A cheetah is upon him, "though all felt it to be so, and some turned away their heads that they might not see him fall and die. It was not so. Again he pursues his course rapidly as ever. It was but his long black hair that had loosened and flowed down his back, streaming in the wind. Another bound and he was out of sight. (17)

The description announces nothing more than a picturesque scene when barren plain, grassy land, hills, and palm trees all are figurative elements in order to emphasize the vastness of space. Nature's variety is subservient to one single plain when the villagers see a variety of views from their point of view. The beauty of nature is tamed and set before the eyes of the beholder allowing the readers to gain imaginative control over the landscape. Dennis's movements on the landscape lead the observer to gauge the magnificence of the "picturesqueness" of Ceylon. The temporary threat a cheetah poses to Denis is eliminated and the landscape is visualized in a passive scenic mode, illustrative of the picturesque.

Hence, there is an unproblematic conflation of landscape and human being when Denis is strongly associated with the landscape; he is able to complete an incredible night-journey, by foot, to and fro between the village and Colombo in one day. His exploits are recounted as a part of natural environment, and his flight is equated to that of a wild animal who can overcome other animals in the jungle. Even upon Denis' return,

the narrator voices this association:

> The moon sank, and for a short time all was dark; but soon the first rays of dawning day lit up the distant hills, and flung a gray and uncertain light upon copse, and dell, and sandy plain. The first notes of the earliest birds were heard among the palms; the monkeys chattered in the neighbouring mango-grove, when a dark form was seen advancing rapidly along the skirt of the forest, and over the green plain. It was Denis, fleet-footed as when he left a dozen hours since. He bounded lightly over the huge rocks that lay in his path, waved one hand above his head to those who had gathered at the bungalow door, rushed through the bamboo grass, and plunging in the sleepy river, leaped up on the nearest bank, dripping wet. (17)

The picturesque formulae construct a manageable other, in the form of Denis who is pitted against a potential hostile landscape that can be framed as scenic when Denis overcomes the untamed wilderness to emerge into civilization, under the civilizing influence of his masters.

But the narrator is unable to neutralize the tensions which arise as the story unfolds. Though seemingly seductive, this idyllic landscape ruptures in the face of racial and colonial tensions within the narrative. The readers can no longer be oblivious to the relations between and among the characters. The picturesque cannot be sustained when Denis, doubly subjugated as the colonized as well as the colonial servant, is punished by the Judge for supposed misconduct. Despite his services to the colonial master, he is reduced to the role of victim of colonial oppression, severely beaten and dispossessed.

He observes how "the smart of those fifty lashes would not nearly equal the suffering he had undergone" in trying to save the life of the child of the Judge. Yet his charisma and devotion to his master cannot rescue him from being bound to the breadfruit tree in the back-court of the Judge's house in order to receive fifty lashes.

The picture-post card setting of the Judge's house "beneath a spreading tope of mangos and palms" is incongruous in the face of violence when Denis collapses in his hut afterwards, bleeding where "the setting sun was shedding its last rays upon the little leaf-thatched hut that stood close by the sea-shore, where the ripple of the ocean was heard like soft music amongst the sea shells and pebbles of the sands"(19). It is an example of how the picturesque aesthetic accommodates and contains violence. There is an attempt by the narrator to erase the wounded body by the sudden insertion of the picturesque setting, characteristic of the picturesque aesthetic itself, which veils violence.[132]

The narrator is unable to erect a clear distance between the observers and the observed on the palette of Ceylon, when the readers are vividly confronted with Denis's wounded body, which violently contrasts with the landscape of the Judge's house framed by jack and banana trees. The picturesque aesthetic fails as the narrative progresses when it is haunted by the memory of colonial injustice that prevails. The narrator questions the actions of the Judge who was "wont to administer summary justice to minor offenders, a sort of morning Lynch law, the efficacy of which was as undoubted as was its legality unquestioned"(18). The violent infliction of corporal punishment by the Judge is

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[132] This is reminiscent of Catherine Belsey's critique of classic realism where disorder is manipulated and engineered towards *closure*, or a resolution: "Harmony has been re-established through the redistribution of the signifiers into a new system of differences which closes off the threat to subjectivity, and it remains only to make this harmonious and coherent world intelligible to the reader, closing off in the process the

representative of the racial violence that inevitably accompanies colonial empires. The colonial law comes to be paradigmatic of duplicity, corruption, exploitation, and violence, when the narrator points out that "[t]rial there was none", displaying the arrogance and violence of colonial power. The tropical idyll ends when the "justice" which the judge administers upon Denis's native body is evident of the unequal power relations at play in Ceylon.

Yet the possibility of agency returns when Denis, deeply wounded, body and mind, by his experience, leaves his master's household and turns into a bandit in the hills. He becomes "*Kaloo Rajah*," or the "Black King," the robber and highwayman, politically conscious about his own subjugated status, and willing to resist. As an unruly rebel, he discards his faithful, harmless demeanor and instead, becomes the aggressor, looting and blackmailing his victims. He robs "whole caravans of traveling merchants." Yet while none can resist the outlaw and his gang, his "toll" was "generally in proportion to the magnitude of the caravan," and he "rarely if ever" molested the poor, even going so far as to bequeath a portion "on the poor of the district, while one share was inevitably set aside for the temples"(19). The threat that he poses to the authorities cannot be contained when all efforts by the colonial government miserably fail. He defies the "impotent efforts of the miserable native police force" and "when at last a detachment of Malay peons and riflemen was sent to the district in search of him, he took to the unknown depths of the jungle of fastnesses, and laughed at their search"(19). He even executes swift revenge on the Judge as a fitting recompense for all the toils and hardship he had undergone, when he vandalizes the Judge's home and humiliates him.

Visions of tropical fecundity and lushness associated with the Ceylonese

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sense of danger to the reader's subjectivity" (69).

landscape are interrogated when readers are made to confront the hardships Denis must contend with, and question the idyllic ambience of life in Ceylon. The viewers cannot employ a detached picturesque gaze, without having to acknowledge native presence, let alone have interaction with the native figures. Denis, as the lead-in figure to the pictorial landscape of Ceylon, refuses to be the manageable other in the picturesque composition. Instead, he is critical in illustrating the discontent of the native Ceylonese. After all, Denis is not alone, as is well illustrated when, on one occasion, "a whistle from him brought from the neighbouring jungles a bevy of grim confederates" to his aid. Hence, rebellion to colonial structures of power is distinct.

Therefore, the text attempts to articulate native agency and resistance through Denis. Ceylon cannot be the natural world of innocence and beauty in the face of ideological and political struggles between various groups as a result of colonialism, which itself can be read as a disruption of nature. The text challenges the colonial picturesque when Denis cannot be conveniently appropriated and sacrificed into conveying an imperial visual aesthetic. He exercises some complex measure of control over his own native subjectivity, contesting his construction as marginal in the production of Ceylon. Yet the resistance this text poses to any simplistic rendering of Ceylon contained within a picturesque framework is undermined when the inter-racial erotic tensions that arise in this narrative are contained. While these anxieties help construct Ceylon as a site ridden with complexity which cannot be neatly contained within a harmonious picturesque aesthetic, the fact that they are subdued problematises opposition.

It is significant that from the beginning, Alice, the daughter of the Judge is

transformed into a figure of worship, especially by Denis.[133] She is the repository of Denis's affections, and when she recovers from her illness due to his efforts, it is difficult "to tell who showed the greatest delight when the young creature smiled again, in health and vigour, the fond parents, or the simple-minded, single-hearted Denis" (18). She is romanticized from the outset when the narrator makes references to her "white and crimson cheek" and "fair" frame (17).

Denis is her complementary opposite when he too is idealized, casting him as her fitting partner. The narrator not only recounts Denis's heroic exploits, but also depicts him as physically attractive. If Alice is the idealized infantile female, he too is equally romanticized, described as "a fine, athletic, dark-eyed, black-haired Sinhalese" (17). His body comes to the fore on several occasions. He is eroticized when his wet hair and body are visualized often, allowing the viewers to relish his body: "he flung himself in [to the river] for a minute or two; then drinking off the milk of a coconut, gathering his long wet hair into a knot, and fastening his head-dress round his waist, he stood all dripping wet from the stream before his master" (17).

However, any hint of such impermissible racial mixings in Ceylon is neutralized when the white female is literally transformed into the child of the story, and Denis's manhood is defused by casting him as simple, childlike and excessively servile while he is the Judge's servant, in close proximity to Alice. He is depicted as a child of nature, childlike and submissive, despite projections of masculinity, facilitating his relationship with Alice:

> It would have done a cynic's heart good to have seen how fondly and

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[133] There is a constant parallel between the relations among the Judge, Denis and Alice, and the relations among Prospero, Caliban and Miranda of Shakespeare's The Tempest.

> tenderly the huge athletic man walked beside the child's palanquin on their return to Colombo; how he chased beautiful insects with gay, glittering wings, and brought them to her to admire as he set them free again; how he plunged into the mazy dells and jungle-depths for pretty wild flowers, and literally strewed her tiny pillow with delicate buds and blossoms of richest hue and perfume. (18)

In order to construct an idyllic environment of Ceylon, both the child-like Dennis and the young Alice are projected into a world of childhood innocence where they can instinctively relate to nature and beauty. Hence interactions between Denis and his little mistress become acceptable, allowing Denis to walk besides the palanquin of the child, chasing insects and picking flowers of various colors for her amusement, but all within the confines of acceptable behavior in the colony. Even when Denis is harshly lashed, and she pleads for him, clinging on to his bleeding body, his "blood streams" which "dyed her tiny dress with deepest crimson hues" (18), such a charged encounter is not deemed unacceptable by colonial standards. In fact it rescues Denis from being further punished.

When Denis proves anything but child-like when he assumes the mantle of a rebel and outcast, Alice still remains unattainable. Although escaping the Judge's house means paradoxically abandoning Alice, she remains his fetishized object, even after he has become a bandit. When the judge's house is plundered, Denis stations himself by Alice's room, the only room where the lamp remains untouched. When the looting is over and they must leave, Denis lingers near her side:

> He looked in, and stepping carefully over the nurse who lay sleeping

> across the doorway, approached the bed where the young Alice slumbered. To bend over her, to kiss her forehead, to remove from her snowy throat the tiny string of corals, to replace it with one of pearls richly set in gold, was the work of a few seconds, for morning was drawing near. Still he could not tear himself away; he drew towards the door, then back to the child, and once more lingered by its side. (20)

His desire to feast on her body and touch her in the intimacy of the bedroom is sexually suggestive, but such transgressions, imaginative or otherwise, are hastily dismissed. He can only gaze at her from afar. Excessive romantic constructions of young Alice project her as an unworldly and compelling creature, further distancing her from Denis. She is a symbol of purity, her "snowy throat" indicative of not only her beauty but the perfection of whiteness, beyond the reach of the brown native. Later when Denis sneaks in to bid Alice and her mother good bye when the Judge and his family leave for England after a few years, the encounter is neutralized. Although he wears her little coral necklace with a gold clasp on his wrists as a remembrance, Alice cannot reciprocate his devotion with similar sentiments. Upon seeing her own necklace on the stranger, she is startled and utters "an exclamation half in terror" (20).

While interracial sexual tensions are thus contained, as Ceylon remains a respectable site where Denis can only revere the female idol in the form of Alice, inter-caste tensions in Ceylon are also defused in the narrative. The issue of caste victimization surfaces through the Sinhalese female in the story, Lenna, the "Rodiya" woman. When Denis is left to himself after the severe lashing by his master, it is Lenna who lovingly tends to him as she helps him recover. She is described thus:

> That poor but beautiful girl, of the outcast race of Rhodias, had long loved him deeply and untiringly, but hitherto in vain. Strongly imbued with the prejudice of caste, Denis pitied but slighted her. To have attached himself to her would have entailed loss of caste on him, and this he dared not do. Now he was reduced to her level: he was disgraced, cut off like the Rhodiya girl from all the rest of the world. (19)

Though Denis equates his predicament with that of Lenna, who is an outcaste, Lenna remains the most marginalized figure in the narrative. While Alice is thus romanticized, and is "his little favourite," the native woman can only become "Lenna the outcast," the woman who "he had so long and contemptuously spurned from" (19). Denis is unable to reciprocate her affections, even if she remains faithful and aids him in his journey, and remains by his side till his capture and incarceration by the colonial authorities. It is interesting that it is Lenna who interrupts Denis when he longingly looks at Alice on the day he ransacks the Judge's house: "turning round, he half started to see a figure at the door; it was Lenna, who anxious for his safety, had not been far away all that night, and now motioned to him to begone" (20). Yet she cannot eclipse the young Alice in the text, displacing Denis's desire for Alice.

Hence, the text falls short of thematizing the suffering of the socially wronged outcaste, Lenna. She is a cipher, vulnerable and silenced within the text. To include her in the narrative is not to redeem her from the margins. As the brown skinned woman, she is suspended between the native male and the white female and functions as a mere seductive image in the text. Her "long black hair" which streams over her shoulders and her light and loving hands all create a picture of an exotic and sexualized woman. Yet

the role she can play within the narrative as a producer of meaning is limited when she is a mere appendage of Denis, without a life of her own. Although the figure of the "Rodiya" woman has continued to obsess the patriarchal colonial male gaze in imperial literature and travel writing on Ceylon, Lenna is positioned as a silent presence in the narrative, remaining secondary to the significantly "male" plot of colonial politics of Ceylon.[134]

Amidst such a context, the picturesque aesthetic is questioned in the text through the narrativisation of Denis' victimization at the hands of the colonial judge, and Lenna's social position in the native hierarchy of Ceylon. But the text is unable to question the native Ceylonese' symbolic exclusion from and marginalization within this narrative. First, the text's attempts to move beyond a model that posits a power binary between the colonizer and the colonized, by introducing multidimensional spheres of conflict and contestation through the issue of caste, are deficient when characters such as Lenna are still othered in the text. Second, to a large extent, Denis is unable to escape the profile of the servile and subordinate colonized even as a bandit, which is well illustrated when he stoops low and touches the feet of Alice and her mother when they are about to depart. When Denis is being severely beaten, the tragedy lies not so much in the act of injustice but in Denis's conviction that to be punished by the colonial authorities is to be relegated to an outcast in society. Denis "knew that one lash from that thong which had drawn the blood of murderers, and robbers, and perjurers, would render him hereafter an outcast from his family and his friends; and the thought of that unnerved him" (18). Third, the

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[134] Many colonial texts, especially colonial photographs, portray individuals of the "Rodiya" caste, especially the women, as their semi-nude bodies could be constructed and marketed as representations of exoticised native (fe)male bodies. See the Palinda De Silva photographic collection at <http://www.imagesofceylon.com/ioc-people.htm> for examples of such photographs.

text cannot escape privileging a "desirable" whiteness through Alice in the text, by constructing her as an object of worship, once again dispossessing the Ceylonese. Such constructions demonstrate the complicity of gender and colonial power. By focusing too narrowly on Alice at the expense of the Sinhalese woman, the text reestablishes the very mythologies it attempts to debunk.

Thus, the Ceylonese landscape becomes a metaphor through which various colonial, anti-colonial and native forces contest and struggle for authority in Ceylon. The picturesque frame cannot naturalize the colonial and imperial formulations on the physical and social landscape of Ceylon. The power struggles and negotiations between the Chief Justice and Denis, Alice and Lenna, and Denis and Lenna all reveal how Ceylon is more than an exotic site for an erotic fantasy. They throw into relief the tensions which surround the construction of the picturesque. They also expose the troubled relationship within colonial Ceylon between differing subjectivities, exposing the picturesque as fictitious, representative of disjunct national, political and economic realities of colonial Ceylon.

Chapter IV

Epilogue: Ambivalent Ceylonese Responses on a Colonial Stage

Introduction: Ceylonese Responses

To begin this chapter, I ask: Is there a way we can retrieve visual cultures of the colonized Ceylonese who did not have access to representational technologies such as photography? And if we do locate such cultures, can we find a visual record of anti-colonial resistance? And, in the absence of such a visual record, what can we discern, for instance, from the response of a group of peasants who can be termed as subaltern to a colonial advertisement in Ceylon? Are these responses devoid of tension, a platform for the Ceylonese to write back, destabilize and subvert the colonial constructions of Ceylon? Or do they become conflicted responses to imperial rule? In other words, are they a site for thinking about how local reactions can complicate contestatory dynamics in postcolonial criticism which posit native constructions in opposition to clear-cut colonial productions?

Although this chapter does not bear directly on the dissertation's central focus--the British constructions of Ceylon in the nineteenth century---I contend that in order to bring closure to my discussion, it is necessary to explore local representations of the colonial relationship in Ceylon. The first three chapters have examined and complicated various visual tropes which construct the repertoire of images of colonial Ceylon. I have read uncertainties, ambivalences and gaps in these tropes to demonstrate how colonial representations can be destabilized in Ceylon. Yet solely concentrating on the descriptive tropes through which the British attempt to construct Ceylon can foreclose other areas of study which can retrieve alternative voices. As Edward Said notes in *Culture and*

Imperialism, the "power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them" (xiii). Therefore it is the kinds of questions posed by such alternative voices/ positions that I am interested in here.

While I have previously suggested that British constructions of Ceylon are always already inflected by the interplay of competing forces which shape the representation, and that colonial representations are contingent and contested works in progress, I wish to reveal in this chapter that local constructions/responses too are multiply inflected, subject to manifold encounters, reciprocities and exchanges. They become a site for exploring not only the strategic interventions and mobilizations of colonial tropes by the Ceylonese, but also their own struggle in negotiating such acts. Local reactions and responses do not easily lend themselves to dominant discourses of the colonizer and colonized; multiple determinations converge in shaping local reactions and complicating them. This reveals that identities are far more complex, and involve far too many entangled issues than a schema of a simple colonizer/ colonized binary will allow.

I begin by proposing a "native" response to a colonial representation as an alternative venue to further speculate on fractured sites of colonial representation. "You Dirty Boy," a Pear's soap advertisement staged in Ceylon offers a framework for analyzing the relationship between colonial selves and native "others." I use the villagers' response to this advertisement as a point of departure to examine their relationship to colonial advertising and, more generally, sites/sights of colonial representation, although it does not fall into the category of mainstream representational forms such as photography and painting. I examine how these responses fit into or

disrupt the visual language of British productions of Ceylon and its people.

Next, I examine two major representations in English as case studies; a local Shakespearean production, and an illustrated Ceylonese satiric magazine. If the native response to the Pear's Soap advertisement elucidates the complexity and ambiguity of colonial representation, both the staging of *As You Like It* and *Muniandi* demonstrate the myriad ways in which the anglicized Ceylonese invent and perform identities, exposing their continuously conflicting identification with a "native" and colonial standpoint, further complicating stereotypical colonial constructions of Ceylon, molded out of a conflictual and oppositional paradigm. Discussing the discourses that the colonized produced within colonial culture, Simon Gikandi argues that "one of the most fascinating aspects of colonial rule was its uncanny generation of narratives that refused to fit into the hierarchies of colonial government and rule, narratives that dislocated the colonial project itself or called its central assumptions into question"(xiii). Yet as he observes, "such narratives still functioned within the epistemology established by the dominant culture of colonialism"(xiii).

Likewise, through an investigation of visual representations by a community susceptible to colonial stipulations, and forever caught between various categories, I show that these two texts, in particular, problematise the notion of the "native". Juxtaposing these two representations against a "native" response to a colonial soap advertisement allows me to elucidate whether and to what extent the same kinds of tensions exist in instances where the natives looking back are not village peasants, with limited access to power, but the Anglicized elite of Ceylon, who wield more agency than the villagers.

It is critical, in this context, to note the sociopolitical climate during the height of British rule in the late nineteenth century in Ceylon. During the nineteenth-century, the British colonial government consolidated its rule in Ceylon by accommodating the native aristocracy by seemingly conforming to the established feudal and caste hierarchy of Ceylon. The British "rewarded their allies among the people with land grants, titles, and administrative offices in which they had a free hand to wield their power" (Peebles 55). Since their privileges would be protected, the feudal-lords became allies of the British, as the British sustained their power as native officials.

The British were also able to command the support of influential sections of the British-educated and English-educated new urban groups. The "local elites maintained order and were expected to assimilate to the rulers' culture, which created an Anglicized elite that was increasingly distant from the people" (Peebles 55). English became synonymous with power, status, privilege and a means to upward mobility. Peebles notes that the "biggest beneficiaries of British colonialism were those who spoke English"(65), which included not only the Dutch Burghers, but also the English-educated Sinhalese and Tamil men.[135] He notes how their "homes, clothing, recreation, and cuisine all emulated that of the British" (66), and "the more the local elite became like proper Victorian gentlemen and then Edwardian dandies, the less suitable they become as rulers" (73).[136]

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[135] For an account of the rise of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie during the nineteenth century, see Kumari Jayawardena's *Nobodies to Somebodies*.

[136] Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike's *Remembered Yesterdays* describes a life lead by the native elitist classes of Ceylon during the nineteenth century. Bryce Ryan observes that Solomon Dias's text recounts "a life spent largely in celebrating royal visitors, soothing troubled countrymen, attending coronations, and in racing horses. The photographs may tell the story: of thirty five photographs, twenty or more are members of royalty, or British Knights. Except for his immediate family and a servant, there is just one picture which includes a native Ceylonese. A large part of the volume relates to honors, investitures, and kind words from royalty"(469). See Bryce Ryan's "Status, Education, and Achievement in Ceylon: A Historical Perspective" for a further discussion of the education and westernization of Ceylon under British rule.

Focusing on local representations in English restricts my analysis to the anglicized community of Ceylon which had access to the language of the colonizer. While I am aware that texts which are molded out of and addressed only to an elitist group do not necessarily break down the distribution of power among the native hierarchy in Ceylon, and that native Ceylonese of lower social classes do not participate in the dialogue these texts initiate, it is precisely the ways in which these texts articulate the fraught relationship between the anglicized Ceylonese and the British that I am interested in.[137]

These two texts allow me to mobilize these anglicized bodies to explore the ambivalent relationship between the Ceylonese and the British, and the anglicized gaze. The anglicized bodies become the site for the generation of ambivalence. They shuttle between the colonizer and the colonized, as subjects of, and agents in, the exercise of British imperial power, revealing the multilayered negotiations surrounding native identity in Ceylon. Unraveling such conflicting sites of enunciation within Ceylonese subjectivity allows for considerable nuance in understanding the differing Ceylonese constructions of Ceylon in response to British representations of the isle.

Homi Bhabha's analysis of mimicry as "both resemblance and menace" outlines the position of the anglicized in Ceylon. Bhabha suggests that while the colonial discourse created the colonizer/colonized opposition, it also produced figures the structure could not accommodate. Such an ambivalent functioning of colonial discourse

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[137] There are numerous instances when colonial English education is used to articulate a nationalist identity, instead of an anglicized one in Ceylon. Anagarika Dharmapala, a renowned figure in the Buddhist revivalist cum nationalist movement in Ceylon, is such an example. Discarding his own anglicised name, in favor of a name with Buddhist connotations, Dharmapala urged for local self-governance, insisting on a national and cultural identity, fiercely critical of British rule. Stating that "Ceylon had been the happy hunting ground of the buccaneering pirates of Portugal, Holland and the British Isles"(700), and calling the

is found in the mimic men, or the English speaking Indians. Bhabha argues that British depictions of the resemblance of anglicized Indians with Englishmen as mimicry was a strategy which appropriated the other, but was also a mark "of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite":

> Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers. (122)

According to Bhabha, the anglicized as "not white/not quite", turn mimicry into mockery, producing moments of indeterminacy in the colonial discourse, exposing its ambivalence and denying its authority, when the difference of the mimic men cannot be appropriated by the master discourse.

Yet how are we to read the representations by the anglicized Ceylonese? Eric Gable's essay is pertinent in this instance. Gable, in his discussion of how the Africans

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British "white Brahmans", castigating their "intolerable arrogance", he noted that the British administrators left "behind their moral consciousness at home"(Guruge, 66).

and the Portuguese colonials "copied each other's bodies to visualize themselves" (294) juxtaposes the actions of Miereles, the Portuguese colonial administrator who recorded the torso scarring of Manjaco women of Guinea-Bissau as evidence of "authentic" African traditions that impinge upon the colonized female body, against the carved European figures in the ancestor posts of the Manjaco. Gables advances the notion of "bad copies", exemplified through the Manjaco who copied the ways of the Europeans in the mid twentieth century. The modernized Manjaco men who copied western dress were seen as "too close to the observing European self, and so insufficiently Manjaco" (Landau, 21). As Gable notes, while the bad copies "upset the implicit paternalism of the colonial enterprise", they also "upset the enemies of colonialism, for the 'black man who wants to be white' is proof positive of colonialism's pathological effect"(299). However, Gables takes to task the notion that the bad copy is an "aesthetic abomination- an embodiment of a troubling inauthenticity" (299). He instead argues that to "copy is to create" one's own version. Landau summarizes Gable well: "The Manjaco were eclectic in their borrowings...they were not cargo cultists, not obsessed with European capacities; with their 'European' markers staked at the margins of physical life, they were simply exercising their right to copy. They reworked themselves on their boundaries with images- much as they had done, in another fashion, by scarifying their bodies"(21).

While Gable questions colonialist notions of "authenticity" which undermine African cultural practices of adoption and transformation, I borrow Gable's concept of the "bad copy" to argue that the Ceylonese narratives construct a parallel to the imperial narratives, and assert their own vision of Ceylon as valid, if not universal. Through my selection of texts, I argue in this chapter that local narratives share in colonial narratives

when Ceylonese also become participants in the construction of "Ceylon", coauthoring the isle, which renders colonized narratives as part of rather than outside of the imperial narratives, where these texts are implicated in and cannot be disentangled from British ways of seeing Ceylon.

However, I argue that these narratives and responses which allow for the production of co-narratives are also sites where complicity or participation coexists with subversion, providing a point of intersection between colonial and nationalist discourses. But just as Eric Gable is reluctant to assume that the Manjaco willfully appropriated the Portuguese images in an act of deliberate subversion, I too hesitate to argue that the local constructions intentionally appropriated imperial discourses in their narratives to resist colonial discourses.[138] In this instance, the question of intentionality arises with relation to subversion: is the "badness" of the local copy intended to subvert colonial discourses? While resistance implies deliberate subversion, I contend that in the Ceylonese context, there is a process of deterritorialization at play, or a movement out of an established system in a new direction, which involves a Bakhtinian appropriation of already existing discourses.[139]

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[138] Eric Gable argues that it is difficult to read the act of copying and carving European figures into Manjaco wooden posts in remembrance of ancestral chiefs as a colonial critique; he notes that this is because of the "ambiguities inherent in copying or mimicry"(312), and a lack of information on how these images were read by both parties: "We would hope that not only would Manjaco have recognized their figurative innovation as a form of 'appropriation,' in the sense that artists and critics today use the term, but that Portuguese recognized it in that way too and felt its sting"(313).

[139] I borrow the term deterritorialization from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In *Capitalism and Schitzophrenia*, they argue that any territory, object or phenomenon, which is characterized by order, is "inseparable from vectors of deterritorialization working it from within"(509). Therefore instability is at the center of territorialization. Deterritorialization involves a movement out of the rigidly ordered, singular, hierarchical territory or object into a new entity, which is amorphous and heterogeneous, characterized by multiplicity. This concept of transforming, reorganizing, and becoming registers what occurs in the Ceylonese texts in response to colonial discourses.

According to Bakhtin, appropriation is an integral component of dialogue, when an individual adopts the utterances and words of others and reworks them for his/her own purposes. Couching it in linguistic terms, Bakhtin argues in relation to appropriation, that the "word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention"(293). Therefore otherness is simultaneously present within one's own words.[140] Yet making others' utterances one's own should not be mistaken for absorption. Individuals assimilate the dominant discourse only to reinterpret it for their own use. As Bakhtin notes, individuals assimilate a word "through its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions"(282), and create their own new utterances.

Likewise, in Ceylon, the local texts draw upon the English constructions, but the result is still their own though laden with appropriation. I show how they create spaces which allow the Ceylonese to reconstruct Ceylon, and reconstitute their own subjectivities by shifting, struggling and staging multiple identities within the colonial stage of Ceylon, opening up spaces for subversion of this power relationship between the British and the Ceylonese. Yet I will also argue that these texts are fraught sites of Ceylonese self-fashioning, opening up a performative space in colonial Ceylon for the dramatization of multiply-entangled identities.

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[140] This is related to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of hybridity, which he formulates in linguistic terms: " a hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages,' two semantic and axiological belief systems....It frequently happens that even one and the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect...and, consequently, the word has two contradictory meanings, two accents"(The Dialogic Imagination, 304-5).

You Dirty Boy: Indeterminacy of the Image and "Native" Disidentification

The *Ceylon Independent* of September, 10th, 1889, an English newspaper in Ceylon, carries the following report titled *"You Dirty Boy" among the Kandyan Villagers*:

> The latest attraction at the Pharmaceutical establishment of Mr Vincent Wright at Kurunegala is a life-size copy painted in water colours of the well-known picture "You dirty boy" cut out and pasted from card-board and placed erect by means of an easel-shaped contrivance, in the outer verandah of the dispensary, which is by the road side. Hundreds of natives daily gather opposite to the dispensary, and gaze, wonder-stricken at the life-like and brilliantly depicted drawing and one is amused by the curious explanations those of the assembled crowd who profess to know better than the rest of their ignorant brethren give of what to them appears as a wonderful pictorial representation. One of the knowing ones was heard to say that it was no doubt a painting specifically executed by royal request for the delectation of the Kandyan sovereigns who reigned here-which by implication would give an existence to Pear's soap somewhere in the fourteenth century, during which Kurunegala or Hastisailapoora was a royal city! (1).

The correspondent at Kurunegala presents the readership with this remarkable account of the introduction of Pear's Soap amongst the villagers, where the local pharmacy brings an advertisement of good hygiene and cleanliness to the crowded public square of Kurunegala. The advertisement is placed at the dispensary, with the intention of

reinforcing its health value, convincing people to purchase the product.[141] Though the correspondent lauds the Local Board of Health for their efforts to improvise on the advertising strategies, the promotional efforts fail when the villagers cannot master the European codes of perception. They seemingly misread the image. The correspondent is bemused by such a response by the villagers, considering their reaction comic, attributing such a misreading to the deficient interpretive skills of the Ceylonese. He dismisses the people's appropriation of the painting as nonsensical, and views the villagers as "ignorant."

I argue that by creating a parallel narrative of their own, the villagers are able to control the production of their own images, reconstituting their own sense of self through the image. They form a space of contestation within which they misrecognize the imposition of European commodities on their economic system, thereby making the colonial image void. The Ceylonese response to the soap advertisement denies the authenticity of a single hegemonic European interpretation, and emphasizes the multiplicity of meanings which surround the image. By participating in and misrecognizing the racial and economic fantasies at play within the advertisement, the villagers reveal the complexity of the villagers' gaze as well as the crisis of colonial representation.

The advertisement is staged so as to entertain the throngs of villagers who gather round the pharmacy. The pharmacy uses dramatic methods to construct a visual spectacle, encouraging the villagers to procure their product. The correspondent notes that a "miniature copy of the same picture has been pasted on to one of the glasses of the

[141] Anandi Ramamurthy makes reference to this incident and argues that "Pear's soap is given medicinal value and put in the role of instructor, carrying out the role of the 'white man's burden' as it establishes its

chemist's lamp erected in front of the establishment on the high road, and when the lamp is lighted the picture makes a pretty transparency and appears to its best advantage"(1). So, in addition to the life-size copy of the painting, a magic lantern-like apparatus is used to maximize the effect. A miniature print is attached to the lamp in order to create a transparency of the image for better effects.

Yet the peasants' response to the advertisement is intriguing. They are full of awe at the image, not because of the visual spectacle on display, but because they construe it as a representation made under the patronage of the Ceylonese kings who reigned during the Kurunegala Kingdom in the fourteenth century. Although the image certainly exudes magnificence and a sense of power to the villagers, the image and its supposed associations are not understood by the imperial subjects. They fail to read the intended signs behind the advertisement, and instead decode the image differently. "You dirty boy" becomes a "wonderful pictorial representation" maintained by the support of the native royalty, not a symbol of commodity culture buttressed by British colonial interests in the nineteenth century. So, although the villagers are invited to identify with the young boy and to comprehend the importance of cleanliness and in turn the necessity of soap, the effect is not what the soap manufacturers or the dispensers intend. They seemingly misinterpret the advertisement initially directed at the white consumer.

But first, the image needs to be read against the backdrop of commercial exploitation in the colonies. Anandi Ramamurthy points out how discourses of race and colonialism found articulation in advertisements. Soap, as one of the commodities which was prominent during the late nineteenth century, became one of the emblems of civilization, infused with the ideology of empire. Ramamurthy argues how soap was

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markets abroad"(41).

clearly racialised and the issue of "black cleansing" (26) came to the fore during this period. She notes how commodities such as soap and boot polish, "where the issue of black, white and cleanliness came to the fore, exploited the theme of colour" (24). In an era when "cleanliness was seen as next to godliness"(24), with connotations of morality and religiosity, the consumption of such products was seen as evidence of one's civility.

McClintock observes how soap advertisements fetishized domestic hygiene and cleanliness as a part of "commodity racism" and "commodity spectacle" crucial to empire. She shows how commodities such as Pear's soap were made to act as a civilizing agent of empire through advertising a poetics of cleanliness which would promote a "poetics of social discipline"(226). Hence Pear's soap as a symbol of "civilizer and cleanser" (39) became a "part and parcel of the process of British colonial expansion"(37). An imagery of whiteness came to be associated with cleanliness, and whiteness in turn was associated with European ideas and beliefs. The act of turning white represents the notion of embracing the civilizing notions of the west.

In particular, "You dirty boy" was one of the major advertisements initiated in 1887 by Pear's soap, where a woman is depicted, supposedly the mother, scrubbing off the dirt of a young boy, with the slogan "You dirty boy". The message reads, "Pear's soap recommended by Mrs Lillie Langtry for improving and preserving the complexion." The ideological underpinnings of the advertisement are very clear. Although this particular image does not depict a black child being scrubbed white, it is reminiscent of the advertising campaign launched by Pear's which used the image of a black child washing himself white with the assistance of a white child. Soap acts as an instrument, able to cleanse and bring in civilization, in the form of whiteness to the "dark" corners of

empire. Cleanliness acts as a metaphor for the desirability of whiteness itself, veiling a fear of blackness.

The advertisement manages to condense a number of Victorian notions of race and coloniality into the image. But the officials' doubts about how effectively they can relate their message to the villagers in Ceylon should not be dismissed. Though the correspondent makes fun of the villagers' response, rendering them 'uncivil', the efforts of the pharmacy in getting its message across to the natives are substantial. This questions the light-hearted dismissal by the reporter. Not satisfied with a single representation of the painting propped on the easel, the officials double their attempts when a copy is stuck on the lantern as well. The dispensary cashes in on the grand spectacle that the magic lantern-like apparatus creates.

The misappropriation by the peasants provokes amusement in the reporter, which soon gives way to foreboding. The natives' reception and (mis)interpretation of the advertisement challenges any colonial intentions. The correspondent's concluding words, that it will be "gratifying, no doubt, to the enterprising firm of Messrs. Pears, which has won a world-wide fame by its innumerable and ingenious advertisements, to know of the novel way in which their saponaceous business is being published in the seven korales of the Kandyan district" (1), is ironic. The spectacular display with the aid of a lamp, lit "by and at the expense of the Local Board of Health and Improvement of the town," becomes ineffectual.

The use of the image by the pharmacy is ambivalent. The pharmacy assumes a literate audience able to comprehend and satisfy the commercial interests of the manufacturer. However, paradoxically, they at the same time also assume a visually

illiterate audience among the villagers when they use several devices such as magnification to draw in audiences. Such labors reflect their awareness that the visual vocabulary is perhaps not intelligible to a wider audience.[142] But the villagers "fail" to see the relationship between the boy being washed white and their own lack of whiteness and in turn cleanliness. The image is exposed as fictitious and is subject to decomposition when it does not have an inherent and immediate visual code, the misreading reflecting its invalidity in an alien context.

Roland Barthes, in his discussion of the myth as a mode of signification which served the interests of a dominant class, describes a myth as a symbol in which the signifier is stripped of its meaning and reassigned a new code which appears entirely naturalized, thereby validating the position and opinion of a specific bourgeois class. He argues that the myth which is a socially constructed reality is often passed as natural in order to conceal its ideological underpinnings. He elucidates such a myth through the significance of wine to the French. While wine is mythologized by the French upper classes to express a unique national identity, Barthes exposes the myth to reveal that its production "is deeply involved in French capitalism, whether it is that of the private distillers or that of the big settlers in Algeria who impose on the Muslims, on the very land of which they have been dispossessed, a crop of which they have no need, while they lack even bread"(61). Therefore, Barthes exposes the artificiality of the sign,

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[142] Timothy Burke, in his discussion of interpretations in relation to visual material in twentieth-century Zimbabwe, argues that advertisers' accounts of African interpretations and misinterpretations were hardly seen as 'neutral'. He notes that "[w]hites were just as likely to express anxiety, and even fear about such reactions"(42). He further notes how "whites' fears that the potentially surreptitious gaze of Africans might intercept images in public space, have not only reflected whites' desire to maintain social control over Africans. Such discomfort has also been rooted in whites' concerns about the power of advertising to transform their own desires and their own sense of self through new technologies of visual representation"(53).

revealing its historical and social origins.

Likewise, in the Ceylonese context, the myth behind the promotion of soap is undermined to an extent when misrecognition highlights the instability in representation. The image disseminates unstable and fractured messages when it shifts, reflecting the inherent slippages in visual representations.[143] While the correspondent assumes that the Ceylonese people are essentially non literate, thus explaining their misunderstandings, he fails to comprehend that the Ceylonese response is legitimate as they are unfamiliar with the visual grammar that accompanies the Pear's soap advertisement. What is critical in this report is how the natives, through their misinterpretation, are instrumental in reclaiming the picture and articulating a native identity.[144]

While natives, in hundreds, daily flock at the dispensary, and "gaze, wonder-stricken" at the prints, they are not mere spectators. They become active consumers, creators and manipulators of the images, when the image is unable to manipulate their desires in the manner in which the commodity dictates. The "life-like and brilliantly depicted drawing" is used by the villagers for different ends.[145] If the image carries a code as Barthes notes, and suggests a particular point of view, that point of view is meaningless for the villagers. The villagers exercise a gaze over the print, in order to

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[143] Paul S. Landau notes that as images "entered alien circuits of information and exchange, images often arrived without any linguistic accompaniment" which is how observers can adjust and manipulate relevant images. He attributes it to the "relative mobility of images, and the relative immobility of signifiers". Landau notes that it is the "momentary parting of resemblance, or "mimesis," from signification, which allowed an image to be invested with relevance, and often, with key parts of the observer's own world"(16).

[144] Karina Eileraas argues that misrecognition is a "disavowal of socially sanctioned identity", a "strategic disidentification"(811).

[145] Homi Bhabha's essay "Signs Taken For Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree outside New Delhi, May 1817" identifies such strategies as "at once a mode of appropriation and resistance" (172).

create their own alternate fictions.

What is at stake is here is that interpellation is disrupted by the ignorance of the codes being used by the colonial advertisement. The villagers create a visual parallel to the dispensary's attempts to construct a visual commodity. The native engagement with the advertisement not only appropriates the image but also produces a "space" outside of imperial constraints. The natives do not actively challenge and refute the Pear's soap representation, as they are not caught up within the product's visual field of interpretation in which they oppose the image through visual defiance. Instead, they occupy a visual field outside of the commodity and visualize the painting so as to reflect their own concerns and circumstances. The villagers interpret the image as a product of a Sinhalese heritage, exhibiting a Sinhalese past, signaling an era of native rule.

It is indeed intriguing how the villagers view the image. While they do gaze at the print, they do not directly interact with the image in front. The villagers do not directly address what is depicted in the image. Instead, the fact that it was produced "*by* royal request *for the* delectation of the Kandyan sovereigns"[my emphasis] is what excites the village audience. Thus both the production and spectatorship are projected back to the Kurunegala Kingdom of the pre-colonial era. So this is not about the image being deferred and denied by the villagers. The area around the image provides them with a critical maneuvering space to navigate alternative interpretations and looks. Thus they participate in the fashioning of a new narrative free of the taint of English hegemony.

Homi Bhabha's claim in "Signs taken for Wonders" in *The Location of Culture* is similar. He examines several moments of the "sudden, fortuitous discovery of the

English book," (145) one of which is the discovery and reception of the Bible by nineteenth-century Hindu peasants. Bhabha explains how these peasants were approached by one of the Indian catechists who sought their conversion to Christianity. Yet as he explains, the Bible or the "Book," which is an emblem of colonial authority, desire and discipline, is misread and appropriated by the natives, producing supplementary discourses which reveal sites of negotiation and resistance. Confronted with the native's disturbing questions about the Book, the Book is de-authorized and reproduced in different forms: "The discovery of the book installs the sign of appropriate representation: the word of God, truth, art creates the conditions for a beginning, a practice of history and narrative. But the institution of the Word in the wilds is also an *Entstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition"(149). Therefore though the book is fetishized, and is a "sign taken for wonders," it is also an emblem of "colonial ambivalence," questioning its authority and fixity, when its initial meaning starts slipping away.[146]

However, while the Hindu peasants recognize the Bible as "the book of God" in order to appropriate it to address a local situation, the advertisement in the Ceylonese context is completely misrecognized by the natives. Parallel enactments (visualizations) by the villagers threaten to erode the oppositions of race upon which the binaries of dominance and subjection, the colonizer and colonized are constructed. Such

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[146] Bhabha further claims: "The discovery of the English book establishes both a measure of mimesis and a mode of civil authority and order. If these scenes, as I have narrated them, suggest the triumph of the write of colonialist power, then it must be conceded that the wily letter of the law inscribes a much more ambivalent text of authority. For it is in between the edict of Englishness and the assault of the dark unruly spaces of the earth, through an act of repetition, that the colonial text emerges uncertainly...consequently, the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (152).

reconceptualizations of the image of the commodity turn the officials' gazes back on themselves, interrogating their position, and history and relation to the object represented. They are unable to reconstitute the villagers in their field of vision. The commodity's supposed transparent message and the villagers' interpretation of that code create an interesting tension between different ontologies or versions of the real, the authorized and the unauthorized text, the visible and the invisible. The unauthorized readings by the villagers are testimony to the ambivalence of the representation. Consequently "You Dirty Boy" breaks down in the presence of multiple circuits of meaning which criss-cross.

Caricaturing Colonial Rule: Muniandi and the Monkey King

I find it particularly useful to initiate my analysis of the anglicized representations of Ceylonese subjectivity with *Muniandi*, The Ceylon Punch, a short-lived, humorous, illustrated magazine in English mainly consisting of caricatures of people and events, which survived for three years from 1869-1872 in Ceylon.[147] Through an examination of this magazine, I demonstrate how well defined categories give way to more convoluted power relationships. While *Muniandi* is delicately positioned in the colonial context, expressing a range of cultural anxieties, it attempts to shift and occupy a space which can be defined as "local" as a means of articulating Ceylonese sociopolitical concerns. Yet such maneuvers are never complete. *Muniandi* employs caricature to contest imperial rule and adopt a local viewpoint, but these efforts are undermined when the magazine straddles between critiquing colonial rule and the limits of the possibility of

[147] *Muniandi* is available in the Ceylon Room at the Main Library of University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

such critique under imperial rule due to its precarious positioning in colonial politics.

Published every fortnight, *Muniandi* offered an acute analysis of the weaknesses of colonial society, exposing social and human follies in colonial Ceylon. It was edited by an Englishman named John Capper (1814-1896), who became the manager and editor of *Times of Ceylon*, and who had previously worked for several English weekly newspapers including Charles Dickens' popular periodical, *Household Words*.[148] *Muniandi* was influenced by *Punch,* a satiric magazine which ran from 1841 till 2002 in England. While the satirical tradition in England flourished in the golden age of satire in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, with satirists such as Swift, Dryden and Pope, nineteenth-century English satire adopted a milder form of criticism. David Kunzle notes that with the advent of *Punch* in 1841, "caricature was gradually and erratically domesticated in tone, format and content." He observes,

> It was transformed from the sharply personal and political to the broadly and decorously social; from the independent, irregular, and often violently scurrilous political broadsheet to magazine and serial illustration of regular periodicity, often subservient to a text and beholden to an editorial policy and mass taste not of the caricaturist's choosing. In short, it exchanged independence for security, sharpness for breadth and guffaw for the smile. (1)[149]

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[148] John Capper arrives in Ceylon in 1837 and works for an agency which primarily dealt with coffee. Yet with the coffee blight he returns to England in 1848 but comes back to Ceylon after 10 years, and takes over the *Times of Ceylon*. See "Planter who became Chairman of the Times: Extract from The Times of Ceylon, January 16, 1960," in <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/970330/plusm.html>

[149] Kunzle observes, with reference to *Penny Magazine,* a similar paper, that "political caricature specified, localized and personalized political and social issues" while the magazine "generalized and universalized" these issues in order to elide issues of social conflict and poverty in England (346).

Such a docile approach to the various social, political and moral foibles of society, which satiric magazines such as *Punch* sought to adopt, is well suited to the Ceylonese colonial context. While sanitized forms of caricature found in magazines such as Punch clearly reflect the capitalist interests of the middle classes who gradually became the audience, capitalist interests are also at stake in the Ceylonese context.[150] M*uniandi* was not only a colonial magazine founded by John Capper, its editor, who was English, but also one that maneuvered its way through an increasingly tense era in the economic landscape of Ceylon, when the coffee industry collapsed, beckoning financial ruin for many. Therefore, keeping the criticism leveled at colonial society moderate is understandable.

Here, it is necessary to analyze the production, distribution, consumption, audience, and the political background of this time, especially in terms of who is addressed in these caricatures and who benefits from the ensuing confrontation between the publishers and the individuals and situations implicated in these attacks. While his identity as an Englishman in Ceylon implicates Capper in the imperial process, illustrators such as J.L.K. Van Dort (1831-1898), a Ceylonese Dutchman, do not simplistically figure as "natives" of Ceylon as well.[151] His Dutch origins complicate his

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[150] According to Kunzle, such apolitical satire in English magazines such as *Punch* in the nineteenth century was also class specific. He argues that satiric newspapers and magazines which predominantly emphasized current news events excluded the lower classes from their readership as the "founding in these years of *Punch* for humorous illustration and the *Illustrated London News* for news illustration created specialized vehicles that were at a higher social level"(1) which the working classes found difficult to access.

[151] J.L.K. Van Dort, (1831-1898) of Ceylonese Dutch origin, was an artist of note in nineteenth-century Ceylon. A draughtsman at the Surveyor General's office, he engaged in portraiture, and he often provided illustrations to various newspapers and magazines. He also did drawings for various texts on Ceylon, such as Ferguson's *Souvenirs of Ceylon*, in 1868 and John Capper's *Old Ceylon*. As the best known illustrator of the time, Van Dort was also instrumental in providing illustrated material to the *London Graphic* of events of note in Ceylon at that period. Most importantly, he was the main illustrator of *Muniandi*.

positionality as native, and grant him a dubious position in the colonies, generating an ambivalent attitude to empire. He takes up an ambiguous, in-between position, distinct from and above the natives, yet subordinate to the dominant British society.

Therefore while satirizing and highlighting the weaknesses of colonial society is critical to the agenda of the journal, any push for independence and self rule has to be restrained to justify the existence of its producers, as well as safeguard the benefits these segments of society accrue due to colonialism, which included Ceylonese as well. Satire, as a conservative form of critique, allows the producers to negotiate their own complex identities and comment on the colonial government, without jeopardizing their delicate positioning in Ceylon. Yet Van Dort, as an artist of Dutch origin, critiquing the British, must perhaps take additional precautions. As one of the major illustrators of *Muniandi,* Van Dort mainly provided images, "generally unsigned, for caricature by a Government servant might have led to unpleasant results" (Introduction, *Ceylon: The Near Past* 4).

Such negotiations provide *Muniandi* a means by which it can tackle its own unstable positioning in colonial Ceylon. It is also applicable, considering that *Muniandi*'s audience too is limited to a certain class of peoples in Ceylon. As the second edition of volume one indicates, *Muniandi* was indeed a success among the readers of Ceylon, but this readership was certainly confined to the English speaking elite classes of Ceylon, who were either individuals of Portuguese, Dutch and British descent or natives who were privileged to wield the English language, who belonged to the upper echelons of society.[152]

Of these groups, the native elite remained steadfast to British rule even as

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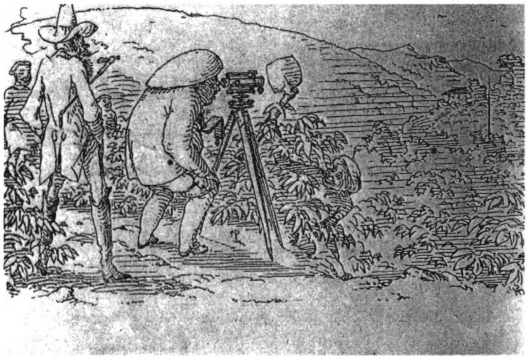
[152] See the preface of no. 2 of volume one of *Muniandi,* published on July 3rd 1869, to read of the reception of the journal, especially by other newspapers in circulation at the time.

nationalist currents emerged, especially in the late nineteenth century. With careers in the government service, the law and the plantation sector, this professional class, though at times critical of British policies, was constrained in their opposition to British rule, precisely because they themselves were largely from the native anglicized upwardly-mobile elite. So *Muniandi* could not afford to offend its audience who were deeply ambivalent about colonial politics of Ceylon. Therefore the magazine emerged out of a complex sociocultural context, which was exclusive, necessitating a posture of diplomacy.

Echoing contemporary anxieties, caricature provides *Muniandi* a means of attacking colonial society using a Ceylonese perspective, while using humor and sarcasm to veil and thereby mitigate any biting criticisms. This is evident through the image titled "Surveying of the Navellapettia Extension" published in *Muniandi*, on November 22nd, 1870, which can be attributed to Van Dort, apparent through the composition of the cartoon (fig. 13). Often, in stereotypical representations of the colonized, the imperial subjects survey the colonial objects from a transcendental position of privilege, and construct the colonized as an object of surveillance and visual mastery. In fact, as I have argued in the previous chapter, the picturesque aesthetic positions the observer and observed in such a framework in Ceylon, although I have shown how those maneuvers are disrupted. Yet this image in particular proposes to turn this process around and invert the structure of the stereotypical colonial gaze and colonial power relations.



SURVEYING FOR THE NAVELLAPETTIA EXTENSION *(Muniandi, November 22, 1870)*

Fig.13: Surveying of the Navellapettia Extension. Muniandi, Vol. 2. No. 6. November 22nd, 1870.

It captures a moment of cross cultural exchange which takes place against the backdrop of the development and expansion of the railway system in Ceylon in the 1870's.[153]

The image represents two British gentlemen, assessing the possibility of extending the railway line from Kandy through Gampola to Nawalapitiya in Ceylon, while a few native coolies clear the field. But this image inaugurates a scene which does not place the imperial observer in a position of superiority over the terrain that he surveys. Instead the British are objectified by the Ceylonese. Therefore it is a conventional illustration of the Ceylonese counter-archive of representations. It traces

[153] The main railway line from Colombo to Ambepussa was extended in stages and connected to Nawalapitiya in 1874. See "Sri Lanka Government Railway," in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka_Government_Railway>

the gazes of the colonizers upon the colonized when it depicts an encounter between the British and the Ceylonese which stands in contrast to the stock representations of the Ceylonese produced by imperial visions.[154]

While the image makes visible the excesses of British rule, evident from the pretentious dress of frock coats, top hats, breeches and high boots adopted by the colonizer, what is interesting are the three turbaned natives. Of the three, two are hardly prominent, though critical to the image. Clearly coolies, apparent from the dress and demeanor, their upper bodies are bare while they seem to be wearing sarongs. Though minimized in the image, their faces are clear enough for the viewer to distinguish a smile that begins to spread across their faces. Yet of the natives, it is the third figure to the right of the illustration who becomes decisive to the image. He is constructed as a comic figure when he peeps through the shrubs. While half of his body is submerged in the bushes around him, only his bare upper body is visible to the viewer. He peeks at the officer observing through the camera, and raises his mammoty in his right hand.[155] Fittingly the caption reads, "FIRST CLASS SURVEYOR surprised to find his Dumpy-level failing him at the most critical moment, not aware of Smith's coolie in the vicinity with an intervening mamotie."

While this scene is constructed as comic, with the Ceylonese figure popping through the shrubs, this image also reveals a returned native gaze. First the surveillance itself is comic. While the two colonial officers direct their gaze at a project of imperial

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[154] The illustrator is not known though it might be attributed to J.L.K. Van Dort who was one of the main contributors to *Muniandi*.

[155] A mammoty is a garden hoe- like instrument used in Sri Lanka, whose blade is about four times as large as that of the average garden hoe.

importance, considering that the Railway was constructed for improved transportation of coffee, and later tea, from the estates to Colombo, the enterprise is transformed into a comic encounter. While the native figure with the mammoty almost plays a prank on the surveyors, such lampooning is endorsed by the other two natives in the scene when they grin at the feat, becoming the audience to the scene being acted out.

This documents the difficulties of imposing colonial projects in Ceylon, and ridicules the whole enterprise of surveillance by the officers. The land for imperial progress is reclaimed by the natives when the two colonial officers cannot take control of the situation. The "first-class" surveyor seems ineffective at his task not only because he is "surprised" at the native intrusion but also due to his pose and mannerisms. While Smith stands quite aloof, more self conscious about his status as the colonizer than concerned about what the land offers him in terms of a railway, the bloated surveyor, hinting at the stereotypical colonizer, is visibly startled at what he sees, unable to comprehend the sight ahead. As the caption suggests, he attributes the failure of not seeing the land to his defective equipment, the "Dumpy-level failing him at the most critical moment", unable to discern the subversive role of the coolie.

Likewise, the other colonial figure, Smith, is also inept at mastering the situation before him. The coolies challenge the surveillance of their master when the master can no longer direct and channel the coolie's gaze. The fact that the native men under the supervision and surveillance of Mr Smith are able to intervene and disrupt the project suggests resistance by the natives against colonial subjection and control. Despite his presence, the coolies enact their own gaze, subjecting the colonial masters to ridicule. Therefore a controlling colonial gaze is defied. First, though the surveyor uses western

technology for land surveillance, the native's use of the mammoty, an indigenous agricultural tool, interrupts his task, hindering his gaze. The camera becomes comically obsolete when the mammoty blocks the vision of the lens. What the surveyor perhaps sees is the mammoty directly before his camera lens.

Second, the entire process of colonial surveillance is problematised when the native subjects return the gaze. Instead of being even minor participants of the colonial project, and thereby endorsing it, the native men gaze at the officers in turn. Third, their gaze becomes subversive when they not only look back, but also look back with humor, deriding and mocking the colonial surveyors. The situation is more complicated when the coolies not only disrupt imperial inspection by interrupting the Surveyor, but also contest the authority of their own master, Smith, by mocking the project he clearly endorses.

Further, though the comedy erases the potential tensions in this encounter and the invisibility of the violence laid out before us, it can hardly erase the frictions within the illustration that nevertheless seep through. The Surveyor is oblivious to the presence of the coolies who do inhabit that land, erasing the native bodies in his attempt to appropriate the land for the Railway. While such an appropriation is certainly violent, the coolie's raised mammoty, though comic in this instance, forebodes a different kind of violence. The ominous blade, raised upwards, also represents the natives poised to overthrow the colonial yoke of exploitation through very real means of violence.

Therefore this image enacts a confrontation between opposed gazes between the colonizer and the colonized, and thereby simplifies colonial relations between the native coolies and the colonial supervisors, embedding them in a grid of oppression and

resistance. An uncomplicated reversal of the Eurocentric gaze where brown is substituted by white is acted out, merely reversing the order and keeping intact colonial binaries, instead of questioning the assumptions on which they are based. Colonial power remains assumed and uncontested when the natives return the gaze, constructing the colonial situation in Ceylon as straightforward. This provides a mode to evade the actual political issues with a fear of colonial censorship. Therefore *Muniandi* ridicules, but the attacks are not vitriolic.

In fact, the preface of the first volume of *Muniandi* published on June 19, 1869 begins by stating that "Muniandi starts on this venture at peace with all mankind" and that it "hopes to amuse, instruct, to enlighten" the readers where it has "mixed no gall in his ink; his pencil is pointed, but only to soften down the shades of colonial life or to bring out the lights of colonial virtues"(3). The agenda is clearer when the magazine notes that its intention is not to agitate for Ceylonese independence and sovereignty but for reform; it does not "expect the Leopard to change his spots or the Ethiopian his skin in a hurry; and a people's ruling passion lies deeper than these. His mission too is rather with those social angularities which render life in Ceylon so unlovely, and its task the promotion of rational amusement"(4). Alluding to the biblical reference that the leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin, the journal suggests that one cannot disguise one's basic nature, just as it is morally impossible for the British to let go their desire to rule. While this indirectly justifies the presence of British in Ceylon validated through biblical language, its western religious rhetoric also signals *Muniandi*'s positioning as a journal catering to the interests of an audience familiar with such ideology.

Resigned that British rule is a continuous feature of Ceylonese life, at least for now, *Muniandi* resorts to rectifying the ills and "social angularities" which render Ceylonese life undesirable. Revolutionary ideals are bypassed in favor of ridiculing and thereby exposing these colonial weaknesses, such as the dangers of arrogant colonial attitudes. Such a delicate balance between social reform and a sharper criticism about colonial rule is apparent through the mascot of the journal, King Muniandi, a monkey, who occupies the frontispiece designed by Van Dort (fig. 14).

King Muniandi announces in the very first edition that the world for a considerable period has "been deprived of his wise counsel and pungent wit", and that he returns to remedy folly, vanity, ignorance and wickedness. In the section titled "Muniandi's "Twackwathadee", King Muniandi critiques British colonial rule:

> Muniandi will speak plainly to this people. Let his words sink deep into their hearts. From that far Western Isle which will ever be "*home*," you have come up into this land to possess it; and what purpose have ye sought in accepting this great trust? To teach these outer barbarians (whose civilization is far older than your own) the subtle refinements in Religion and Morality which mark the age in Europe? Or to demonstrate the progress of Literature, Science, and Art since the days when Britons dwelt in huts and dressed woad, whilst *Parakrama* built walled cities and gigantic tanks? No! But simply to serve your own selfish ends. You have come here with a single eye to making money. Your religion is the pursuit of pelf, your God "the almighty rupee," your Law to *do* others oftener than they *do* you, your Profits cent. per cent. Your principle self interest, and

Fig. 14: The Frontispiece. Muniandi. No.9. Vol.1. Nov.6, 1869.

> your belief is humbug generally; your Literature is confined to your ledges, your Politics to your pockets, your Arts to the carving of a fortune (too often with a *chisel*,) your Science to the cure of tightness in the chest, your "*Pleasures*" to a long-armed chair and a "Trichy" cheroot! Of a truth, it is essentially every man for himself, and now happily, Muniandi for you all. (Vol. 1, No. 1, p.4)

Muniandi positions himself as one of these "outer barbarians" in order to unravel the evils of empire by documenting the exploitation by the British of Ceylon. He castigates the administrators for their intent in making profit in Ceylon under the façade of benevolence. This meticulously outlines the selfish motives of the empire. Driven by self interest and indifference to the native peoples, British rule is displayed as a farce. Further, not only is British rule ineffective for the colonized but it is also inferior and uncivil. Muniandi pits ancient Ceylonese civilization against the English, demonstrating the modernity of Ceylon and reversing the stereotypical assumptions that regard the native as primeval. Instead it is the English who inhabit "huts" as opposed to walled cities of ancient kings of Ceylon.

Hence, *Muniandi* projects Ceylon into a modern temporality, subversively showcasing an alternative indigenous governance of Ceylon. King Muniandi is seen as a fitting ruler of Ceylon contesting clichéd representations of natives as primitive and savage. Van Dort, in fashioning Muniandi, the mascot as the king of monkeys, satirizes European stereotypes of the bestial nature of the colonized, supported by hierarchical notions of race-based theories of evolution. *Muniandi* mocks such conceptualizations by deliberately using monkey figures which climb out of the trees as Ceylonese to interact

with the "cousins", the colonial figures who inhabit the lower planes of life. Muniandi is not just a monkey perched in a tree, but one of authority who is able to ridicule colonial authority figures. Yet he is a figure difficult to place as he simultaneously parodies British authority by positioning himself as King, while giving into colonial authority. We need only read the statement at the beginning of the journal when King Muniandi states that he himself is "of royal status and accustomed to rule, he will concede respect to authority."

Van Dort's conceptualization of the monkey as the mascot is a mocking but comical response to empire.[156] Anti-colonial rhetoric is veiled through the vehicle of comedy and satire, neutralizing the threat *Muniandi* poses to colonial rule. This is by fashioning the mascot as such. Let us first discuss how King Muniandi is visually portrayed in the frontispiece. Surrounded by several ape-like figures, presumably monkeys, perched on several branches of a tree, sits King Muniandi at the center of the frame, holding a pen in one hand and a palm leaf manuscript on the other. He wears a crown on his head, indicating that he is King Muniandi, and that the other figures who surround him are his loyal subjects who attend him at Muniandi Palace. The two sentinels who stand on either side of the King hold flags which proclaim 'fun' and 'jokes'

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[156] In this instance, it is relevant to note how Van Dort is both harsh in his attack on colonial society, as well equally critical of Ceylonese "bad copies." For instance, Van Dort's caricatures published in A.M. Ferguson's *Souvenirs of Ceylon*, depicts a series of law-court characters such as the Judge, the Registrar, the Crier, the Jury, the Interpreter and the Witness. Van Dort utilizes the series to critique the servile and corrupt tendencies of colonial society. The preface to Ceylon: The Near Past refers to this series by van Dort and notes that the "genial and well nourished" gentlemen "accurately represents the high-class Sinhalese as evolved by two generations of English colonial policy, under which complacent acquiescence bordering on sycophancy generally was rewarded emolument and honours"(3). Van Dort adopts a "native" perspective to depict the native peasant subject to the pressures of such a colonial life. For instance, in this series of law figures, the native 'witness' is noteworthy. He who is witness to the proceedings of the court immediately creates a visual contrast to the rest of the figures. He stands quite perturbed, intimidated by the alien setting, lacking in both colonial trimmings as well as nourishment. He grabs onto the bars behind the witness box, bare bodied except for a short cloth that wraps around his waist. Unable to manipulate the colonial codes, he is depicted as not only a witness but also a potential victim of the colonial legal process.

representative of Muniandi's Kingdom.

But *Muniandi*'s attempts to occupy a "native" space and articulate native interests along with colonial interests complicate its attempts to carve out a local identity. For instance, an ominous tone seeps in when the magazine attempts to convince colonial administrators of the positives of embracing Ceylon as their home:

> Ceylon will always be regarded as a sort of stepping-stone to fortune, but why make the fortune so rough and jagged, since a sojourn of some years is inevitable, and too many unhappily never reach the other side? What is the end of it all? You expect to make money enough to return for good to the dear old country and enjoy all its pleasures, and by way of preparation you make life here as uncomfortable to yourself and everybody else as possible. Perhaps twenty years hence you will go home, (with a liver a trifle too large and a temper much too short) and then you will be "a stranger in a stranger's land" indeed. You will be about as fit to enjoy "the season" either in town or country, as a bale of your own *Mule Twist*, -the pleasure to which you look forward will be as Dead sea Fruit that turn to ashes in the mouth. (vol.1. no.1, p. 4)

While Ceylon is astutely recognized as a commodity for the British, a mere "stepping-stone to fortune", the suggestion that many will not be able to reach the "other side" or their motherland is menacing. Britain is projected as alien and foreign, a space to which British men and women cannot easily return. Colonial bodies are largely unintelligible to the English, their bodies scripted, imprinted and diseased by the colonized space. Hence categories and spaces begin to intermingle through the bodies of the colonial men and

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See Ceylon: The Near Past for an account of Van Dort's life as well as a selection of his sketches.

women who cannot be readily absorbed by England.

But more clandestine and direct mockeries of colonial society are found in the magazine. In fact even a brief analysis of images in *Muniandi* shows that the conflicts over political and colonial issues took place in the arena of visual culture as much as in the printed word. The prints can hardly be read as simply illustrations of events verbally described. For instance, the illustration titled *The Parting-Colombo* is significant (fig. 15).

The caption reads, "But whatever faults he may have –and which of us is perfect- he has a good heart, for I know that he has sent all the way to Jaffna, for some of the best specimens of its jewellery for 'cadeaux' to those ladies who have been kind to him in Ceylon." The picture depicts the General surrounded by five or six women who have pulled out their handkerchiefs, and while a few sob into them, turning away from the officer, others face him in anguish. His status as an individual who wields considerable power is obvious when the women seem relatively powerless and are drawn to his side. One woman in fact leans imploringly besides the General who himself reaches out to her with one hand while the other shields his tearing eye. Dressed in his military uniform with a wide sash across his breast, the General too is portrayed as grieving the imminent parting with the women.

The Parting, Colombo

But whatever faults he may have—and which of us is perfect—he has a good heart, for I know that he has sent all the way to Jaffna for some of the best specimens of its jewellery for "cadeaux" to those ladies who have been kind to him in Ceylon." -- [*vide Ceylon Times,June 1st*]

Fig. 15. The Parting, Colombo. Muniandi. Vol. 1. No. 1. June 19, 1869.

A comic twist to a tragic romance, the print and its caption are a derisive attack on colonial politics in Ceylon. The General, as the imperial representative, is an individual whose morality is in question, suggested through the sarcastic caption which refers to his numerous "faults" which can be easily forgiven because of his generosity-to the women. But it is the presence of a box of Jaffna jewels by the side of the General which is more

incriminating. According to the caption, the box of jewels has been especially brought from Jaffna as gifts, which consist of the "best specimens" of jewelry available. The open lid of the trunk indicates that the distribution of the gifts among the women has already taken place, the women rewarded with trinkets as appreciation for possible favors granted. He exploits Ceylonese wealth for selfish motives.

So the political underpinnings inscribed in the image become clear. The political and economic wrongdoing suggested through the General points to British corruption of Ceylonese society. The relationship between a capitalist economy and an imperialist enterprise is clear when Ceylon is commodified through the Jaffna jewels, which are at the beck and call of the British. Yet this is not simply a matter of self interest, a vivid reminder of *Muniandi*'s initial accusation, that imperial interests are driven by self interest. Sexual overtones dominate the caption as well as the image, situating this in the intersections of sexuality and colonial power. Colonial rule is also predicated on sexual use of women, who are consequently abandoned as implied through the image. Although it is difficult to discern if the women are British, Eurasian or Anglicized Ceylonese, they become sexual objects of an imperial marketplace, exchangeable commodities, accumulated just like the jewels, in the mercantilist and capitalist trading and colonial project in which Britain was involved in the nineteenth century.

The General also becomes a figure of hypocrisy when he veils his selfish deeds under the pretext of religion. Although the women are not easily distinguishable in terms of their ethnicity, it is possible that they are Anglicized Ceylonese women, especially when the General hands them necklaces which carry a cross. While one woman who has turned away holds one in her hands, the General holds one in his hands, which he is about

to offer to the woman kneeling next to him. The pendant hanging on the chain resembles a cross, hinting at religious signification. While the cross becomes representative of imperial manipulation of religion in order to further imperial rule, it also reveals that Christianity was as much implicated in the sexual pragmatics of Ceylon. The General, representative of the imperial class, becomes the epitome of political, economic, religious and moral corruption of empire.

The supposed moral (and sexual) indiscretions leveled against the British officer certainly did not go unnoticed in Ceylon. C. Brooke, in the article "Eminent Ceylonese" talks of the "most conspicuous attack" which "led to a famous law-suit in October, 1869, called Edgcumbe Vs Ferguson, which was tried by Mr Berwick, D. J. in the District Court of Colombo". He adds that the "plaintiff, an officer in the army, published a picture in Muniandi ... in which the late General Studholm Hodgson, commanding the Troops in Ceylon, was depicted (as shown in the picture) saying a fond good-bye to certain fair ladies" (Brooke 21). A. M Ferguson, the editor and proprietor of the *Colombo Observer* wrote a violent article in response in which he attacked the plaintiff. He said that the above mentioned cartoon intended to "caricature and ridicule the said Lt.-Gen. Studholm Hodgson by conveying the impression that the said officer had been during his career in Ceylon unmindful of the duties and responsibilities which belonged to him in his domestic relations and that he indulged in levities and familiarities with certain ladies in Ceylon."

This episode is critical not just in outlining the law-suit but in analyzing the impact *Muniandi* had on the sociopolitical context of Ceylon. The fact that the caricature of the image was not sanitized enough for the audience is obvious through the outrage the

illustration caused, activating a legal battle in Ceylon. Yet one should not uncritically accept that this critique enacted through *Muniandi* is devoid of ambivalence. While this image in particular attempts to adopt a Ceylonese viewpoint, and mock the corrupt actions of the colonial authorities, one must not be blind to the contradictions in such critique. As a magazine torn in its allegiances, *Muniandi* offers a plurality of Ceylonese responses to colonial rule, depending on the different political and social positioning of the contributors. But despite this variety in perspective, all share the need to limit the effects of such transgression, aptly illustrated through the magazine's humorous mascot, King Muniandi, who reduces its sting from the outset. *Muniandi* demonstrates a complex vision of imperialism, marked by its inability to forge a place separate from the ruling colonial classes of Ceylon, not implicated by imperialism.

As You Like It: Native Bodies in Performance

The mockery in *Muniandi* which appeases both colonialist mentalities and nationalist tendencies is officially tolerated by the colonial government of Ceylon, though the "native" subtext of the illustrations is a potentially dangerous supplement to the colonial discourses of the magazine. But while *Muniandi* illustrates the difficulty in constructing a "local" identity autonomous of colonial interests, due to the conflicting and contradictory negotiations which take place between multiple groups in Ceylon, Edward O'Connor Terry's light hearted account of a local stage production of a Shakespearean comedy shows how the Ceylonese dramatize a local identity through spectacle by constructing the stage as a localized site through which they can appropriate and refashion British cultural markers.

Terry, an eminent English actor (1844-1912), encounters the local production when he visits Ceylon and attends *As You Like it*, staged for the first time in Ceylon on April 9, 1890. He reports the account in an article titled "Shakespeare in Cingalese" which appears in the *Era Almanac*, an in-depth weekly newspaper about the theatre, published from 1837 to 1939 in England for a British audience. Corresponding to *The Stage* newspaper from 1880, the *Era* focused primarily on theatre, actors, music hall, and all related matters, its audience consisting mainly of individuals in the theatre industry in Britain.

I use Terry's account as a case study through which to explore the problem of counter-representation by the Ceylonese. This report seemingly relates the troupe's failed efforts to produce a Shakespearean performance satisfactory to Terry as well as to British audiences reading this description: in other words, it is a bad copy. Yet I contend that it also illustrates the fractured attempts by the local theatre group to construct a spectacle of their own as an alternative to imperial versions. Terry's persistent critique of the production opens up several questions. Why is Terry insistent on repudiating this production? Are there threatening elements about the play which prove disconcerting to him? I argue that Terry's indirect lament about the native inability to represent Shakespeare accurately articulates his frustration to capture and tame what is before him. However, the Ceylonese Shakespearean production too shifts from an alternative rendering to an ambivalent performance of native agency and authority.

From the outset, the play is described as an incoherent and undesirable display of the work of the English bard. But though the play seemingly caters to a European audience outwardly, and the promotional pamphlet declares that the "acting and singing

of our actors and actresses" has "thoroughly satisfied" the "Ladies and gentlemen who have been to plays in England and other European countries"(69), the performance, according to Terry, is anything but English. The announcement advertising the production is humorous. Staged at the "Purna Chandra Loka Theatre" in Colombo, the announcement reads, "doors open at 8.30 p.m. *Trouble* begins at 9" [my emphasis]. When 'trouble' does begin, the entire production is stage managed so as to literally trouble Terry's gaze. With a motley crowd of urchins as crusaders, midget warriors carrying wooden weapons and an incongruous interpretation of the script, the performance is meaningless for Terry, despite the additional bonus of a Eurasian actress, and disintegrates into fantasy.

While the warriors present "anything but an imposing appearance"(69), the play is monotonously chanted; the close of each scene is "emphasized by two lines of (very) blank verse"(70). The staging of the play is comical from the start. Beetles drone about the theatre, interfering with the audience concentrating on the play. While costumes do not evoke the period, only a few characters from the play actually appear on stage, "to suit the exigencies of the company." Sir Roland's wig and beard threaten to come undone during the performance to the astonishment of the audience, and Oliver, his son, is made to replace it before the body is carried off the stage. Last but not least, the wrestling match between Orlando and Charles proves hilarious.

The very absurdity of the production offers an alternative framework for understanding the intermeshing processes of colonial relations in Ceylon. While Terry labels the local stage production of Shakespeare bizarre, the seeming inability of the Ceylonese to stage an "authentic" Shakespearean production seems to exemplify the

disruptive potential of the local representation to a colonial audience as well as to an English readership at home.[157] Drawing upon Eric Gable's notion of the "bad copy," I argue that the very inauthenticity of the play is not a lack of its credibility and a point of vulnerability, but a site for discussing the underlying unease of the colonial authorities of the contradictions of colonialism as well as the destabilizing force of native productions of Ceylon.

Terry attempts to conceive of the play as a flawed representation by insisting on a returned native gaze. He sees the performance as a potential for the reversal of the European gaze, when he is concerned about how his image as the British subject is reflected back at him from the eyes of the Ceylonese troupe. He begins his article with an interesting observation about the capacity to see oneself and one's own culture reflected back in the mirror of the Ceylonese:

> Had the immortal bard succeeded instead of preceded Robbie Burns, and witnessed the representation of *As You Like It* at the Purna Chandra Loka Theatre, in Colombo, I am certain the effect would have been so startling that he would have entirely disagreed with the sentiment, "O wad some power the giftie gie us, To see oursels as ithers see us," and most assuredly he would have repudiated that which was represented as his handiwork. (69)

Terry suggests that the local performance reflects a distorted version of self, or a bad copy of the self. Such notions where the colonized can mimic the "authentic"

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[157] See Jyotsna Singh's "Different Shakespeares: The Bard in colonial/postcolonial India" for an account of reproductions of Shakespeare in Calcutta and the politics of such a staging. Singh argues that these performances contested the notion of the singularity of Shakespeare: "indigenous performances of the plays produced different, vernacular Shakespeares, mediated by the heterogeneous forces of race, language and

Shakespearean model but not quite attain it, enact, as Bhabha argues, both repetition/mimicry and difference. While he argues that "mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge", "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite"(122), it is an indication of a weakening of colonial control. In his theoretical construction of the constitution of the "colonial subject", Bhabha conceives of hybridity as clearly undermining the binary categories of empire, and as a figure of transgression, the brown sahib begins to blur the binary constructions. As Bhabha remarks, "The visibility of the racial/colonial Other is at once a point of identity ... and at the same time a problem.... [T]he recognition and disavowal of 'difference' is always disturbed by the question of its re-presentation or construction" (116). Therefore, the inability of colonial institutions to establish dominance in the face of such instability reveals sites of struggle over colonized identities.

In the instance of the Shakespearean performance, I ask: who is the bearer of the controlling look in this performance? And who is the object of the look, if anyone is fetishized? Although he is profoundly ill at ease with the notion of the Ceylonese mirroring his own identity through the stage production, I contend that Terry's discomfort arises precisely because the performance enacts alternative fictions that Terry is unable to register. Terry cannot comprehend what he sees on stage, when the performance is not simply an imperfect copy of the English play. The local Shakespearean production in fact transforms and even disables a "normative" performance and opens up sites of difference which are legitimate according to a Ceylonese perspective.

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native culture" (447).

Though the performance enacts a western text, creative agency lies with the Ceylonese troupe, when they reclaim a complex aesthetic tradition often tainted by colonial exploitation. They articulate a native subjectivity. That is, English cultural productions such as the Shakespearean theatre were perceived as a part of colonial domination and cultural colonization.[158] While local appropriations disrupt the universality and singularity of the English playwright, the Ceylonese troupe exerts their own gaze by forming a space within which they manipulate and assume authorship of the play. Although the performance enacts a western text, local authorship is emphasized, however comic, when the "printed argument" or the printed program of the play is placed on each chair with the words, "Not to be removed". They attempt to "tamper" with the text when they leave out characters and revise the play, even naming "The Ducal Palace" "The Forest of Arden."

They reclaim the performance by reinterpreting the original text, as well as visually rearranging the play through excessive spectacle. According to Terry, the costumes are out of place. They do not correspond to the period of the play. The Duke is attired in a Charles the Second costume, and Rosalind and Celia are dressed in a "mixture of Charles the Second and George the Fourth period." He notes that Charles the Bold "certainly wrested the palm from the other characters for eccentricity of costume, which consisted of a traveling cap, a red and yellow striped rowing jersey, pink pyjamas tied round the ankles, and goloshes"(70). Though Terry dismisses this as frivolous, these costumes are crucial to the local production. Such extravagant and excessive costumes not only reorganize the play but also construct a visual spectacle for the Ceylonese

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[158] See Gauri Viswanathan's Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India (1989) for a discussion on the ideological importance of literature in consolidating empire.

audience, inviting the audience to experience the play as an enjoyable performance, an ostentatious display of color and fabric.

The staging of the duel in the play is equally significant when it deviates from a traditional model. The duel is comic when the wrestling "that ensued was of the most curious description; as it was certainly not Cumberland or Westmoreland style, it must have been purely Cingalese" (70). Charles, the professional wrestler, is cast as a comic figure, who "indulged in a long recitative, interspersed with a violent jumping exercise"(70). The men hardly touch each other, according to Terry. Yet despite the lack of wrestling, the opponent is defeated with a mere slap: "Orlando contented himself" with "singing something scurrilous at Charles, so irritating the latter that, after squaring up and dancing round the singer (at a safe distance), he at length incautiously got within striking reach of Orlando, who slapped his face"(71). Such an anti-duel that ends with a dance reinterprets the play, discarding outmoded aristocratic masculine codes of behavior in favor of theatrical effects which readily allow a Ceylonese audience to consume the play as a pleasurable visual spectacle. While it becomes an anarchic mess for Terry, the Ceylonese spectators enjoy the delights of such visual excess, taking pleasure in the performance even when it extends well beyond three long hours.

So the Shakespearean pastoral comedy becomes carnivalesque, inviting the audience to share the energy on stage.[159] Terry's spectatorship is problematized when the play refuses to absorb him in a naturalized narrative, where the narrative is arbitrary instead of inevitable. The play is largely presented as a construction, a loosely related

[159] This is reminiscent of the carnivalesque of Bakhtin which is celebrated for its revolutionary potential. He states that "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its

series of spectacles. Terry's frustration also arises perhaps because the play does not engage with him as one of the spectators. Although the announcement beckons a European–inclined audience to "see and satisfy" themselves since "it is a sight worth seeing," the play is obscured for Terry from the start. The performance becomes "[r]eally a trial of endurance for the spectator." The wrestling scene is stretched to three hours, with eight remaining scenes still to be performed. He is unable to bear such a performance and leaves half-way through the play, despite the raging tropical storm outside. He dismisses the performance, sarcastically stating that he was "thoroughly satisfied" with his "first experience of a Cingalese theatre." So while it seemingly pays homage to British cultural institutions, it does not offer any pleasure to Terry and becomes meaningless.

But what challenges Terry's gaze is not a native gaze of reversal but one of disengagement, troubling any invocation of oppositionality. There is a disconnect between Terry and the production which denies him any visual control of the play. Hence, Terry finds it fitting to discount the production by declaring that "the drama is not in a flourishing condition in Ceylon" and that Shakespeare himself "would have repudiated that which was represented as his handiwork". He insists on denouncing the production contrary to his own observations that he "discovered posted on native huts, bamboo fences, &c., the visiting cards of my old friend Johnny Toole, who had passed that way, giving a performance at 10.30 A.M., with the thermometer at something near 110 degrees in the shade"(69). Yet, his claims begin to disintegrate when the presence of a Johnny Toole suggests that an English theatre was very much present and active in Ceylon.

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own freedom" (Rabelais and His World 7).

Terry is denied visual pleasure or control when, instead of merely returning the gaze, the native Ceylonese actively recreate their own versions of imperial cultural expressions. In fact, the play indicates that Terry's own position as the privileged spectator has begun to break down due to the transformations taking place within the sociopolitical landscape of Ceylon by the late nineteenth century. A space for subversion of the power relationship between the colonial spectator and the native object on stage opens up when some Ceylonese also position themselves as spectators. During empire, Ceylonese theatres entertained largely a British audience, but in this instance, not only do Ceylonese actors infiltrate the stage but also the audience. Terry discovers, upon his entry to the theatre, that there was a poor house: "There was not a good house, the first-class seats being occupied by about a dozen Cingalese ladies and gentlemen"(69).

While it is ambivalent whether Terry equates a poor house with fewer viewers or a local audience, what is significant is that the Ceylonese not only form the cast but also become a part of the audience. They displace Terry by occupying the first class seats. The shift in patronage, as a result of political and economic negotiations and alliances with the colonial government, reflects how local residents come to occupy a space originally fashioned for the British, signaling a weakening in colonialism. They actively position themselves as spectators of the play before the stage of empire as well as primary consumers of a space intended for the colonials. For the newly affluent local elite, the play provides an opportunity to purchase visibility and social standing and appear on equal footing with English gentlemen such as Terry. The local production is intrinsic to elite Ceylonese subjectivity and class formations. Hence multiple gazes criss-cross the production, interrogating the construction of Terry as the sole spectator of the

play.

Terry is quick to discard such disturbing visions when he views the performers as unclean. Referring to the scene where the kind citizens visit the exiled Duke, Terry observes how the respective actors "disgrace" the stage, because of their attire and appearance. He states, "let us hope their 'kindness' and charity covered their palpable sins in the way of cleanliness, for their dress was disreputable and their faces dirty"(70). Despite Terry's refusal to sanction the performance, the unauthorized and unrehearsed script of the Ceylonese is interpreted differently by the native audience. Terry observes that the audience "who, by their laughter, (when they were not engaged dodging the flying beetles), seemed to consider *As You Like It* a very funny play."[160] But more importantly, they readily welcome the play. Though Charles' antics such as "throwing a catherine wheel" are bizarre to Terry, and remind him of actions which would do credit only to a "London Street Arab", the local audience is "pleased with the performance". In fact Charles receives "an enthusiastic encore" from them.

The construction of whiteness is also troubling for Terry. The cast literally attempts to whiten themselves in order to resemble the Europeans, reminiscent of Bhabha's mimic men. Terry notes that the "members of the P.C.L. Company, in order to give some semblance of a European complexion, had whitewashed their faces." Yet whiteness is profoundly disturbing for Terry when it becomes an artifact, illusory and artificially staged. He is troubled when the faces of the cast appear "as white as a clown's at Christmas" (70). Manufactured whiteness is transient and ephemeral when the heat makes the actors perspire, resulting in the gradual running of their make-up. Terry

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[160] J.A.Will Perera narrates this incident in "Shakespeare in Sinhalese as it struck a famous actor in the nineties" in order to illustrate the humor of the performance.

says that such streaks showed the "dark brown skin, and gave a peculiar mottled appearance"(70).

This incident can be viewed through the framework Bhabha provides. He points out that mimicry is a strategy of colonial knowledge and power – where natives take on a "flawed identity" that attempts to mirror the coloniser's identity only to thus reveal their imperfection. They blur the distinction between the colonizer and the colonized, and become a subversive figure. Yet in this instance, I argue that the trope of whiteness is not just reflective of the "threatened return of the look" (116) that Bhabha suggests which troubles or resists a straight imperialist reading, but also other differential modes of fractured responses to colonial rule. This can be explored by analyzing the staging of gender in the play.

Though Terry apparently mocks this custom of daubing their skin white to resemble Europeans, one of the incentives for an audience including Terry to attend the performance, as the announcement reads, is a "Eurasian actress, who bids fair soon to be called The Nightingale of Lanka" who "will make her *debut* to-night." So from the outset, whiteness associated with femininity promises eroticism, enticing the voyeur, making it worth attending the play, as the announcement reads. But when Rosalind and Celia do appear on stage, they repel rather than tantalize Terry. He discovers that they are boys, and are "fair, but not beautiful." They also present a "most extraordinary" appearance: "The same ringlet-wigs and complexion as Orlando, but more so-especially in the complexion. The whitewash had been laid so thickly on Rosalind's face that her right eye was completely blocked; this necessarily somewhat detracted from her personal appearance"(79).

The question arising from this incident is suggestive. What is significant is that Terry first cannot situate himself as the male spectator in the face of racial and gender impersonation which takes place in the play.[161] Such a male gaze breaks down when the fictitious white body as well as the feminine body are exposed, revealing a native masculinity that underlines them both. The female roles are played by boys, and native boys at that, whose whiteness has been emphasized so as to exaggerate an ideal femininity. Further the white makeup which partially blocks Rosalind's vision also deflects his gaze, interfering with the visual consumption of her body. As he describes, it lessens her looks; Rosalind cannot be a passive to-be-looked-at object. Both whiteness and femininity are deliberately staged so as to dismantle them.[162]

However, such disruptions the local enactment holds is vexed, demonstrated through Rosalind's performance of whiteness. Rosalind, as a Eurasian, blurs the boundaries between raced categories and symbolizes the possibility of racial contamination of colonial male blood. Therefore, her body is a site of instability for Terry. As one of mixed race, make-believe categories begin to unravel, necessitating that the white make-up be "laid so thickly" on her face. Yet Rosalind, as the Eurasian actress, is the breed of choice on the native stage, not only for Terry but also for the Ceylonese producers. Her fetishization from the beginning by the Ceylonese troupe who displays the announcement is on account of her racial proximity to whiteness. Though the mimic men and women of the troupe who are "not quite/not white" perform whiteness and enact

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[161] Laura Mulvey posits the ideal spectator as male, resulting in woman as image, man as bearer of the look.

[162] Judith Butler perceives gender identities as a type of performance. She speaks of gender as a "repetition of acts instituted through the stylization of the body, and, hence must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion

its break-down in this play, they are unable to evade the rhetoric which privileges a Eurasian identity. I contend that this dilemma is embodied through Rosalind's gaze. Her blocked eye suggests a partial blindness, reflecting the violent and disabling effects of such hybridity on her body which she cannot erase. Rosalind's strategy of disguise is shown to be disempowering in this instance.

As You Like It, as a play about issues of gender in the context of various social and cultural conflicts in the late sixteenth century England, perhaps resonated well with a local troupe who must not only enact but embody equally tangled identities and subject positions in Ceylon. But while gender is performative when Rosalind and Celia stage the feminine, race cannot be so easily disguised in the play, when the painted faces on stage threaten to come undone on the stage. While this performance grapples with issues of race in the Ceylonese colonial context, and provides the audience with a critique of racial categories, to what extent it is a reactionary art form to Terry is in question, when experiments with racial permutations are confined to the stage. Yet it can be inferred that its potential to copy and thereby illustrate, through deterritorializing moves, the complex and even paradoxical appropriations of an "authentic" text, is what leads to Terry's dismissal of the performance as a site of disorder.

While both *Muniandi* and *As You Like It* show the convoluted and complex manner in which Ceylonese form their own subjectivity, and demonstrate how sociopolitical factors complicate the position of the Anglicized, obscuring the possibility of clear-cut counter representations, the native response to the Pear's Soap advertisement can be read as a reflection of the colonial anxiety surrounding the recognition that conditions of reception are always ridden with conflict, revealing the instability of

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of an abiding gendered self"(402).

colonial representation and its fractured status. Visual images are not just constructions which are consumed and contested by the Ceylonese, to be deferred and denied. As all three texts demonstrate, colonial representations are at times co-authored and transformed when the Ceylonese too become participants in the construction of "Ceylon". However to underscore native participation is not to diminish the actuality of colonial imagery, its role in power relations, and its domination effects in the imperial encounter in nineteenth-century colonial Ceylon.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have specifically examined nineteenth and early twentieth-century British constructions of Ceylon: I have shown how visuality has been central to the production of Ceylon since the nineteenth century, and I have focused on a set of representations which can be read as inadequate in producing picturesque and exotic agendas of Ceylon. While I have revealed moments of instability in colonial representation, initiating my analysis with Julia Margaret Cameron's Sri Lankan photographs, I have demonstrated how Ceylonese representations produce Ceylon as a contentious site, where multiple and contradictory frames converge. As such, I wish to conclude my dissertation by examining if picturesque and exotic images and ways of seeing have continued over time and are still manifest in new forms. I maintain that exploring briefly to what extent tensions and complexities are effaced in contemporary representations of Sri Lanka reveals the persistence of certain representational paradigms such as the picturesque, and yields important insights into cross-cultural negotiations of identity in the post-imperial era.

To this end, I will examine the contentious construction of the picturesque and exotic in Julian West's *Serpent in Paradise*, published in 2007, a novel set in the early 1990's in Sri Lanka. While West, the author, claims that the "real island has given me some of the best things in my life—my skin, my blood, my sense of belonging and mischief," Eva, its main protagonist, is also of partial Sri Lankan ancestry. She returns to her mother's home in quest of her hidden past and in search of a sense of self, against a backdrop of civil strife in the country, political struggles of separatist guerilla groups for a homeland in the North and the insurrection of insurgents in the South. The fear and

violence that war engenders are omnipresent in the island, amidst human rights violations by both militant groups as well as the government, constructing an ideal location for West to produce Eva's own narrative of anguish and betrayal. "[L]ove and loss" are the novel's main theme according to the author herself, and the story narrates Eva's relationship with Carl, an American journalist, and Navahiru, a Sinhalese law student.

What is intriguing is how Eva, the bronze-skinned, brown-fingered central character in the novel, occupies a fraught subjectivity in the text. Although she returns to the island as an adult, having spent her childhood and adolescence in England, her partial Sri Lankan identity prevents her from accessing the island from a foreigner's perspective. While her own mother's existence in England is described as unsuccessful, an instance "more complex than a tropical flower failing to take root,"(24) Eva is also compelled to leave England in search of the island for the "missing piece of a puzzle; the answer to something, unnamed, that had been troubling her all her life," (10) and finds her mother's ancestral home in Sri Lanka as her "only real home, even though I've never lived here"(19). In fact, she is identified as an islander at times, and when she and Navahiru, her native lover, make love, both are described as "[t]wo bodies from the same soil, singing the same tune...a dark brown body and a bronze one"(29). Carl finds her "strange, exotic, and, he guessed, complicated; fascinating and repelling in equal measure,"(18) and even questions, "you don't come from here?"(19).

In fact the text is not only complicated through Eva's precarious positioning as a partial Sri Lankan, but also through her own refracted gaze on the island. As a photographer who had "spent too many years in the time-capsules of airports and hotels, photographing the same disasters,"(10) Sri Lanka seemingly provides her with a

landscape conducive to such photographic practices. She distances herself from the affluent classes of Sri Lanka who have turned a blind eye to the bloody war, the "small deracinated layer that sat on the island's simple, tropical exuberance like a bowler hat on a calypso shirt" (90) as Carl observes, and attempts to relate to the conflicts through the lens of a photographer. The novel begins when Eva, along with Navahiru, is "cataloguing corpses" in the streets, seeking visual proof of the horror and inhumanity of the contemporary landscape of the island: "She wondered what unnatural compulsion, disguised as professional detachment, enabled her to photograph these bodies. Different faces, different ages, some messy, some clean, but all wearing death's uniform"(10). While her own childhood memories of the place are transformed into a "black-and-white snapshot with serrated edges," (9) joining the numerous photographs in dusty old shops of ethnographic and touristic pictures of "ebony-skinned pearl divers, bare-breasted gypsy girls and up-country chieftains dressed like meringues in tri-cornered hats,"(9) snapshots provide a means for Eva to grasp the island.

Although Eva declares that she tries to "take pictures of beautiful things"(17), images of Sri Lanka are no longer pictorial but are repulsive images of the political carnage of the island. The photographs which already circulate in the island are images of brutality, documenting a landscape scarred by war. For instance, battered photographs are the only visual proof of identification for war-affected mothers whose sons are missing in the violence. "Empty-eyed women huddle outside the gate, clutching black-and-white snapshots of their sons, missing or dead"(129) near the "'unofficial' army camp," and the images become "their small beads of hope, until time and official contempt and the mocking sea wore them away"(129). While the "boys in the pictures

stared intently at the lens, like rabbits caught in headlights,"(129) Eva is compelled during one instance to lower "her camera without taking a shot" when she sees a jumbled pile of dead bodies through the viewfinder, "a little boy in navy school shorts, a half-naked mother clutching her infant, an old woman, blouse hiked up to reveal spent old breasts, waiting for the dignity death had promised and then denied'(210).

Images of nude women can no longer be framed by the woman photographer as erotic and exotic in the face of violence, and aesthetics give way to the documentation of bodies. Navahiru, who wishes to specialize in human rights, and whose passion lies not in the practice of law, but in art, some of his work engaging with "bold, semi-abstract studies of village women in thick oils, raw and urgent,"(34) acts as a "contact" for Eva instead of an artist, sharing in her passion to document the atrocities of the isle, becoming a part of the team cataloging corpses in secret at night. Such a dying aesthetic is represented through Eva's surrogate father, Caspar, the blind artist, who at the end turns out to be her real father. While Caspar is literally paralyzed, no longer able to engage in art, his dilapidated house and magical garden symbolize a fading era which cannot be rendered picturesque and salvaged in a vicious political landscape.

Eva is unable to not only transform scenes of violence and chaos into a more palatable form, but her gaze is also deferred when she herself, as a photographer, is subject to the scrutiny of the political authorities of the island. Photographs by Eva are not captured in the serenity of paradise, but in a restricted climate increasingly hostile to such work, where Eva must evade the prohibitions imposed by the government. It is hardly surprising when Eva is once violently confronted by Piyadasa, a policeman, tussling for the film which carries visual evidence of sights/sites of tragic loss.

While a web of suspended gazes complicates the novel, issues of gender surface when the challenges faced by Eva as a woman and as a woman photographer when Navahiru disappears correspond somewhat to the challenges faced by war-affected women in Sri Lanka. Yet it is significant when Eva, as the partial islander and the photographer who attempts to record the horrific consequences of civil and military struggle, shuttles between Carl, the American war correspondent who acts as an imperial voyeur in the novel, and Navahiru, and ultimately finds refuge in Carl when both Navahiru and Caspar die at the end. Although Carl reports on the armed struggles in the island, adopting a perspective which is relatively aloof and detached, despite the mounting humanitarian crisis in the island, it is he who is able to provide Eva a sense of security and home.

But despite the complexities and tensions in the novel, what is intriguing is the manner in which the exotic is superimposed in the narrative. The landscape, ravaged by "political tragedy"(9) is continuously reframed as an exotic "island," with simplistic "island boys" such as Navahiru, who lacks Eva's intensity, who rests "on her mind as lightly as a sunbeam,"(29) as opposed to the brooding and mysterious Carl who produces chaotic emotion in her. While Navahiru is produced as an innocent and transparent individual without complexity even while he is embroiled in a deadly political intrigue, a "flash of white teeth in a dark jungle pool,"(35) he is still an exception as Eva observes: "she was certain that, unlike so many islanders, he concealed no areas of darkness, no demons lurking in his soul"(35). Therefore, it is hardly surprising when he and the island--the benign and sensual version of the island she wishes to cherish--collapse: "He was like the island. The one she loved."(28).

Likewise, the text is interspersed with exotic imaginings of Sri Lanka, a picturesque landscape of jungles and wildflowers, cobras, and elephants, saffron robed Buddhist monks, and holy ash, intermingled with a bloody landscape of tortured corpses, mutilated bodies, burned tires against the smell of kerosene, death squads and death threat letters alongside menacing graffiti lining the walls of battered cities. West notes that the island in which her novel is set is a "lush, tropical paradise which seduces travellers with a beauty that, in reality, masks malevolent forces" and that "there really is a serpent in paradise."

The exotic is further reinforced when the tale is recounted through a web of intrigue, black magic, spells and charms, beckoned through Mary, Carl's housekeeper. The erotic and the exotic collude when Mary specifically engages with love magic to entice her American employer. Her black magic is normalized when the narrator concludes that Sri Lanka is a preordained site of superstition: "Everyone in the island, whatever their religion, seemed to be entangled in magic; it was the bass beat throbbing beneath the surface of island life like jungle drums in the night"(30). Images of black magic reinforce otherness, displacing socioeconomic and political factors which result in civil strife in the country. That a complex history undergirds Mary's actions as well as the actions of the rebels and insurgents is ignored by West when the text is reduced to a personal narrative of betrayal, and loss, centered around the triangulated relationship among Eva, Carl and Navahiru.

Therefore the post eighties ethnic and civil struggles in Sri Lanka which have heavily tainted the picturesque landscape of the island are appropriated by West to produce a potent backdrop to an erotic plot in an exotic setting. While I have attempted

to reclaim "Ceylon" as a site for exploring tensions in colonial productions of the island, West's novel aptly illustrates how political, economic and social manifestations of such tensions are surreptitiously erased in favor of a more palatable plot. The readers become embroiled in an adventurous narrative when even a cyclone is sprinkled on to the concoction of dangers present in the island. While cyclone Sita threatens to devour Carl on his way up North to report on a political incident, it provides a fitting finale to the plot when it becomes a moment of reawakening for Eva who recognizes Carl as her true love, producing the commonplace narrative of a lovers' tryst in an island where physical, natural and supernatural disasters form inevitable obstacles to such bonds.

While West's text betrays the fact that the "island" is a fractured space, and that to package it as solely exotic and picturesque is problematic, the recurrence of such images in contemporary representations of Ceylon in familiar but new ways reflect not only the tenacity of these visual icons, but also the manner in which the exotic tropes are reactivated in a new sociopolitical setting. A complicated combination of internal and external socioeconomic political and cultural factors such as ethnicity, religion, culture, politics, ideology, foreign intervention, residual colonial tensions and economic liberalization, which are some of the root causes for the violence within and between communities in the island, is simplified, veiling the actual causes that plague the island through a nostalgia of loss. Eva observes that "paradise had been betrayed, not by an external force but by its own denizens. She felt not just bereaved but robbed"(212). The impact of ethnic and civil strife on the general population is simplified through a fatalistic worldview supposedly adopted by the Sri Lankans: "[Carl] realized that [Captain, a Sri Lankan] was typical of an island where no one thought very much about

anything...Things happened and then they were over"(92): "Carl was never certain whether to attribute this attitude to denial, pragmatism, or an extreme case of tropical lassitude, aided by fatalism and the promise of a better deal next time"(93).

During one instance, the sight of corpses is only a moment of personal reckoning for Eva, the dawning of the realization that Carl is her destiny: "And, she was, once again, a child in the road by her father's car, begging him not to leave. It was then that she decided to escape that life sentence. To embrace love, not run from it: its dangers and its sweet, sad treasures"(212). It is hardly surprising when the novel ends with Eva and Carl by the sea, against a backdrop of a starry sky, the "cup-shaped moon", sea-spray and sea weed, and sunrise. However the romance enacted within the text is incongruous in the face of racial and political tensions, political terrorism and corruption. Therefore the violence to an extent cannot be effectively sterilized in a rhetoric of paradise, exotic sex, superstition and myth, a convenient fiction to further construct Ceylon as an "other."

But what are the implications of such tropical imaginings which have carried tenuously across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? While it would be problematic to assume that only imperialistic perspectives attempt to efface such politics in favor of a benign picturesque, post-independence Sri Lanka too has employed such imaginings in their favor, manifest in travel and touristic brochures which appeal to the foreign eye for the purpose of tourism. But such pictorial constructions which have attempted to override the violent landscape have been strained. While the fractured picturesque and exotic evident in *Serpent in Paradise* are indicative of the tensions apparent in post-imperial Sri Lanka, the re-emergence of the picturesque as a nostalgia for a glorious past against the undesirable political conditions of the present is even more disturbing. While

it illustrates how fragments of essentialist colonial forms of seeing are recoded and packaged in new and insidious forms, it also demonstrates how tensions are repressed in an almost similar way as the nineteenth century texts of Ceylon, and issues of conflict, which have scarred the landscape of Sri Lanka, are appropriated only to stir imaginations, effacing their actual impact on the island.

But while the construction of the island within a pictorial framework which is predominantly picturesque even in twenty first -century representations such as *Serpent in Paradise* is intriguing, recent contemporary texts such as Vasugi V. Ganeshananthan's *Love Marriage* (2008) reveal why Sri Lanka cannot be simplistically constructed as a picturesque island in the face of war, displacement, immigration, and exile, even from the confines of New York and Toronto. While *Love Marriage* unfolds the story of the struggle for identity of first-generation American Yalini, the daughter of Sri Lankan Tamil immigrant parents, it is unable to obliterate the ramifications of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict when the violent political past begins to encroach upon the family living in the US in the form of a visit from her dying uncle from the island, Kumaran, a former member of the militant Tamil Tigers. While such a dynamic reveals how even a cosmopolitan diasporic writer such as Ganeshananthan is unable to efface the pernicious effects of a complex Sri Lankan past in her text, it is also testimony to the fact that negotiating a new mode of post imperial violence in Sri Lanka requires a different aesthetic, a way of looking that can no longer be accommodated through a simplified exotic and picturesque lens.

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