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An Analysis of Elizabeth von Arnim's *The Benefactress* and
Charlotte P. Gilman's *Herland* as New Woman writings

&

Henry R. Haggard's *She* and *Ayesha* as a masculine retort

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0. Foreword

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1. Introduction

This paper examines the origin and development of the image of the New Woman in the context of a growing sense of feminization at the end of the nineteenth century and the consequent expression of altering female values, here examined in the novels Herland (1915), written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 – 1935), an American novelist and The Benefactress (1909), composed by Elizabeth von Arnim (1866 – 1941), a British writer. Both novels will prove to address the matter from a different perspective and create slightly diverging visions.

The male part of society, who experienced this evolution as a threat to social stability, reacted in various ways. The second half of this thesis will inquire into the works She (1887) and The Return of She (1905) of one particular British writer who was occupied by the actions of these ‘New Women’: Henry Rider Haggard.

The outset of this paper discusses the creation and growth of feminists’ suffrage movements at the end of the nineteenth century and the image of the New Woman in two thriving nations: Britain and the United States. The late Victorian period was a time of continuous social, political, economical and geographical change for Britain. The importance of imperialism and colonialism had caused the British Empire to reach a highpoint during the reign of Queen Victoria. Nevertheless, established Victorian values were disintegrating as the turn of the century approached. Women’s suffrage movements and the figure of the New Woman threatened to stagger social and political stability. Four significant works will elucidate important developments and characteristics. In The Haunted Study (1989), Peter Keating discusses the change of the nuclear family due to the adjustment of married women’s rights that entailed a decline of male power. The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact (2001), edited by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, considers the significant stages of women’s struggle for more opportunities and the consequent rise of the figure of the New Woman. While in Elaine Showalter’s Sexual Anarchy (1990), she talks about the New Woman’s critique on the institution of marriage, in Engendering Fictions (1995), Lyn Pykett describes their appearance and unaccustomed attitude.

In discussing female reaction against the domestic role forced upon them and the desire to integrate in the public sphere of the United States, two works will be of significant importance. In Feminism and Suffrage (1978), Ellen Carol Dubois addresses women's plea in favour of equality between the sexes, while Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott discuss the inferiority of women and male fear of female freedom and independence in One Half the People (1975). Talking about the chronological development of women's suffrage movements, they stress women's yearning to alter social roles and men's strain to conservatively reaffirm them.

In an introduction of the characteristics of female authorship, the work Gender and the Victorian Periodical (2003) composed by Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston and John Sutherland's essay "The Victorian Novelists" (1976) comment on the fact that publishing anonymously had two contradictory consequences for women and the reason why they needed this pseudonymity - in spite of the growing equality - in the first place. In the Haunted Study, Peter Keating studies the pioneering attempt of a woman who, using pseudonymity, tried to convey a woman's point of view. Nevertheless, he claims that such a point of view remains difficult to discuss due to the lack of women novelists at the end of the nineteenth century. Contrary to Keating, Lyn Pykett asserts in Engendering Fictions that, for there was a growing sense of feminization, more writings were produced about and by women who were led by the figure of the New Woman, creating a new style.

The following chapters inquire into two ways that served feminists writers to challenge established convictions. The first one, explained by Jane Eldridge Miller in her Rebel Women (1994), is a new kind of novel that opposes itself against the conventional marriage novel. Instead of being a necessary ingredient for happiness, marriage prove to be an impediment to it. The returning to the status quo at the end serves as an ironic or sarcastic endorsing of conventional ideals. A second way is the creation of utopian, imaginative worlds that plead for more freedom and independence. Growing up in the first wave of feminist movements, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Elizabeth von Arnim applied these techniques in the novels mentioned above. In the light of their social and political backgrounds, I will explain how and why these women created their particular literary Utopias and what intentions they had, if any, for the effect of these works.

First I will give a brief introduction of the concept of Utopia. I have followed the guidance of Gary Saul Morson's The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia (1981) and Robert Elliott's The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre (1970). Both authors give an elaborate definition of the notion. Morson introduces the reader to the concept of the 'delineator', describes the genre of literary Utopia as an epistemological story, and makes an interesting comparison with the *Bildungsroman*. A final source is Christine Rees' Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction: From Robinson Crusoe to Rasselas (1996) in which she considers the women's Utopia, the kind of Utopia that is relevant to this study.

Subsequently, I will consider several of these characteristics by applying them on Gilman and von Arnim's novels. In giving a short outline of Gilman's life, it will become clear that her ideas were shaped by her unconventional family situation. In an introduction to the 1979 edition of Herland, Ann J. Lane further comments on Gilman's peculiar perspective on domestic life and its consequences for the novel. In analysing how the literary qualities serve the novel's purpose, the function of character depiction, focalization and the humoristic – ironic – tone are discussed. In order to function as a social and historical critique, Gilman uses comparison as a literary mode and presents the story as an epistemological one.

In her essay "In a Class of Her Own: Elizabeth von Arnim" (1999), Alison Hennegan discusses von Arnim's peculiar social position and experiences in life that shaped her qualities as a writer. Further, Jane Eldridge Miller links her with the altering shapes of the marriage novel. In the analysis of The Benefactress, several literary qualities such as character depiction, choice of words, focalization and tone are examined in function of the novel's objective. Attitudes towards marriage conveyed through exaggerated discourse with a sarcastic undertone and an ironic return to the status quo and subsequent failure of the utopian society serve the novel's feministic purpose.

The subsequent section considers, as in line with the previous, the characteristics of male writings. Both John Tosh in Manliness and Masculinities (2005) and Elaine Showalter in her Sexual Anarchy consider fear about many decline and ensuing opposing action. Novelists who considered female power a threat to social stability, demanded a redefinition of male identity and novel writing. This paper deals with two different manners in which power

relations are portrayed in favour of men: imperialist literature intermingled with the male romance, and utopian literature.

The first one, closely connected to the genre of adventure fiction, needs to be examined in the context of the development of the British Empire. In The British Empire, 1558–1995 (1984) T.O. Lloyd writes about imperialistic stability, activity, enthusiasm, decline and reorganizing in the Victorian era. In spite of the importance of this background, Wendy R. Katz claims in Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction (1987) that there is no explicit link between empire and fiction. The chapter further contemplates the appearance of women in these stories and the description of its landscapes, perceived as a female body in two diverging ways according to Rebecca Stott's discussion on the matter in her essay "'Scaping the Body: Of Cannibal Mother and Colonial Landscapes'" (2001). The male romance received these characteristics and in her Engendering Fictions, Lyn Pykett discusses the genre's aim and peculiar expression of fear of the female.

The second manner is the application of utopian literature, which went through a revival at the end of the nineteenth century as a genre still considered to be more male than female, but will nevertheless prove to serve both sexes in different ways. In The Boundaries of Genre, Morson talks about the status of women in utopian fiction throughout the centuries and Rees' Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction continues the discussion. Further, Morson considers several important male writers who, although trying to make a compromise, nevertheless became more and more domestically conservative. In addition to this, Rees mentions the remaking of the political Utopia that focused on female power and served as a parody. The latter subgenre will prove to be the literary context of Haggard's two novels here under discussion.

The last section that precedes the final conclusion contains a description of Haggard's life and work. The first paragraph will discuss important facts and experiences from his life that are significant to fully understand the setting and ideas of his novels. Subsequently, there will follow an examination of his imperialistic romances in general with Katz discussing their influence on young men in Britain and the significance of the stories' characters in her previously mentioned work Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire. In discussing She and its sequel Ayesha: The Return of She, this paper stresses the differences and similarities between the two novels. While their structures and ambiguity resemble, their plotline and depiction of Ayesha's behaviour diverge. The version applied for the study of She is the

version preceded by an introduction and notes by Norman Etherington: The Annotated She (1991). The analysis starts with a discussion of the structure and narrating voice, followed by a description of the beginning of the protagonists' quest and their encounter with an indigenous tribe, through whom Haggard ironically conveys a different perspective on sexuality coinciding with that of the New Woman novelist. In addition, by means of Peter Keating's The Haunted Study, Haggard's moral relativism will be discussed. The third step is the encounter with the apparently omnipotent She, preceded by an opposing depiction of the landscape as masculine and feminine. In her essay "The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard's *She*" (2007), Tamar Heller describes Ayesha as an embodiment of conservative anxieties about the New Woman and talks about the meaning of her vegetarianism. Further, she links the female threat to masculinity with a threat to imperialism. Ultimately, in Sexual Anarchy, Elaine Showalter discusses the significance of Ayesha's apparent death, as in the sequel she will appear to have triumphed over death. Throughout both stories, the focalizer's attitudes towards women will prove to alter explicitly. As a conclusion, the literary aspects of character depiction, focalization and choice of words are linked to Haggard's social purpose.

2. The New Woman

2.1. Britain

The Victorian period was, above all, a time of unprecedented development and change: economic, industrial, geographical and political. The movements of reform that emerged in this period – from expanding legal and political rights to public sanitation and education – were, in many ways, linked to this pattern of change with broader structural reforms helping the discourses of liberalism and social change to emerge in several fronts, including that of feminism.¹

The nineteenth century, an era of diminishing power for the Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Ottoman empires, was a flourishing period for the British Empire. The reign of Queen Victoria, which started in 1837, marked the beginning of a new era for Britain: the Victorian era. The Queen's death in 1901 also meant the end of an age of imperialism, colonialism and social inequality. Victorian rituals and traditions were considered of paramount importance as etiquette and good manners were a significant ingredient for every well brought-up child's education. In the late Victorian period, which covered the last decades of the nineteenth century, these Victorian ideals slowly began to disintegrate. As Peter Keating claims in The Haunted Study, representative government² and the family, two areas of life they regarded as inviolable, "came under strong attack in the late Victorian period." The family altered due to "[l]egislation relating to education, the rights of women, separation and divorce, employment and social welfare." Social and legal changes were specific threats to the stability of the family. A true woman had to be pious, submissive and domestic. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a married woman and her children had no legal rights independent of her husband's authority. As the century evolved, "[t]he process by which the

¹ Fraser, Hilary, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston. Gender and the Victorian periodical. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003: 169.

² According to Keating, representative government survived "by adapting itself to new democratic demands, and accepting, often without enthusiasm, responsibility for a far greater range of social needs than ever before." (The Haunted Study: 152.)

power of the father was brought within ‘the reach of legislation’ can be traced through a series of parliamentary Acts which gradually conferred independent rights on married women and children.” Keating further underlines the growing difference between fictional power of the “awe-inspiring, stern, dominant, often violent father” and his actual powers “which declined or were taken from him.”³

Women considered marriage and the nuclear family as impediments to their development. During the course of the nineteenth century, they tried to alter their subordinate social and political position thus challenging the traditional institutions of marriage, work, and the family. In their introduction to The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact, Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis go through the significant stages of women’s struggle for fuller educational, social, and political opportunities for women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initially, the Reform Act of 1832 formalized women’s exclusion from the franchise but it was rejected. Gradually, “a small but conspicuous group of women began to campaign for female enfranchisement and emancipation; this culminated in 1866 in the presentation to Parliament of a petition signed by 1499 women, demanding that the suffrage reform then under consideration includes votes for women.” The next year, the National Society for Women’s Suffrage, which would evolve into the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, arose. In 1905, a militant campaign gave rise to the Women’s Social and Political Union. “Private Bills for women’s suffrage were each time defeated until in 1918 the vote was given to women of 30 and over, and in 1928 to women of 21 and over.” The figure of the New Woman, fighting for individual rights, was thus created. “Early and mid-Victorian ideas on progress, passion, morality, femininity, domesticity, development and evolution are replayed and reworked by New Women in the last decades of the century.”⁴ This brand-new concept would prove to be very extensive and would manifest itself in very divergent ways. Writers such as Virginia Woolf are associated with the ideas of the First Wave. “For thousands of Edwardian women⁵, the suffrage movement provided them with a goal and a community, moved them out of their homes into an activist and public sphere, and allowed

³ Keating, Peter. The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875 - 1914. London: Martin, Secker & Warburg, 1989-90 edn.: 152-153.

⁴ Richardson, A. and Chris Willis, eds. The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms. Houndmills New York: Palgrave, 2002: 3-4.

⁵ The Edwardian era is the period following the Victorian era, covering the reign of King Edward VII, from 1901 to 1910.

them to express their unhappiness with women's unequal status as well as with their own particular lot."⁶

In Sexual Anarchy, Elaine Showalter makes a distinction between what she calls 'the odd woman' and the New Woman. "The odd woman – the woman who could not marry – undermined the comfortable binary system of Victorian sexuality and gender roles." The feminists of the late Victorian period used the increase of unmarried women to indicate that the traditional marriage and domestic roles were outdated and "that social policies which denied them higher education, alternative roles, professional opportunities, and votes were self-defeating and cruel."⁷ Women who missed out on marriage were left - or chose to be left - without a husband to financially support them and consequently had to be able to educate themselves. "Unlike the odd woman, celibate, sexually repressed, and easily pitied or patronized as the flotsam and jetsam of the matrimonial tide, the sexually independent New Woman criticized society's insistence on marriage as woman's only option for a fulfilling life."⁸

The nineteenth-century women's movement challenged socio-cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity, separate spheres that were considered unassailable in the Victorian era. The turn-of-the-century period was one of severe gender crisis; as Lyn Pykett points out in Engendering Fictions, "[i]t was the latest phase of longer-term changes in social and familial roles, particularly those of women, and in relations between man and women."⁹ The New Woman can be described as an amalgam of both the male and the female, both the cause and the cure for current social ills. "She was 'mannish' in dress, as she was in her overdeveloped mind and her underdeveloped flat-chested, lean-hipped body. [...] Paradoxically, however, the 'mannish' New Woman was also said to display an excess of 'femininity' in her overdeveloped feelings."¹⁰

⁶ Miller, Jane E. Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel. London: Virago Press, 1994: 126-7.

⁷ Showalter, Elaine. Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle. London: Virago Press, 1992.: 19-20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁹ Pykett, Lyn. Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century. London: Edward Arnold, 1995: 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

2. 2. The United States

The woman's role had been shaped entirely by her position in the family when domestic life used to be the centre of social life. While the growth of industrial capitalism moved production outside the home, the woman's place remained within the family, whereas public life became a man's sphere with political activity as its essence. As Ellen Carol Dubois explains in her Feminism and Suffrage: "Suffragists [as opposed to domestic reformers] recognized that the locus of community life had shifted away from the family and that women's aspirations for a greater voice in the conduct of community affairs could be satisfied only by their moving into the public realm."¹¹ In the same work she explains that the demand for women's suffrage raised the prospect of sex equality when she says that "[w]omen hoped, [...] that in the public realm men would have to face them as equals."¹²

Women's inferiority to men was not only physical but also intellectual. As Anne Scott and Andrew Scott indicated in One Half the People, "[m]en had a right to say how they were governed; women needed to be ruled by men for their own good."¹³ The fact that the fight for women's suffrage only came about in the second half of the nineteenth century can be ascribed to male fear and opposition against increasing female freedom and participation. To many people, emancipated women were a threat to social stability. "For two hundred years women in America had worked alongside men, listened to political discussions, observed the growth of local, state and federal government, and had rarely complained publicly because they were not allowed to vote or hold office."¹⁴ The last decades of the nineteenth century were characterized by two opposing social movements: women trying to change their political status and diminishing their domestic constraints, and men desperately trying to reaffirm women's restricted role. "An increasing number of advice books fell from the newly mechanized printing presses, many of them directed toward reinforcing the view that God and nature had defined woman's role, and that women who tried to change it were a danger to themselves and to society."¹⁵

¹¹ Dubois, C. Ellen. Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848 – 1869. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978: 16-17.

¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³ Scott, F. Anne and Andrew M. Scott. One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage. Philadelphia, 1975: 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

A convention at Seneca Falls (New York) in 1848, concerning women's rights, marked the beginning of a social movement with an impact still noticeable over a century later. Scott and Scott indicate that "[b]y 1860 women's demands had been articulated, many essentials of a feminist ideology had been developed, and the suffrage movement was a lusty infant. [...] To gain access to political power they needed the vote."¹⁶ While some women were lured by the adventure of challenging the established order of a male-dominated society, others were frightened and too insecure to speak up and only applauded the former's courage and gradual triumph privately. "The more urban and industrial society became, the less the home was the centre of economic, social and political life. Women whose lives were confined to "the home circle," as the phrase went, were cut out of much of the mainstream of the culture. With limited opportunities for higher education, they did not participate in the intellectual movements of the time."¹⁷ Over time, more and more women became aware of their situation and claimed rights over their own persons and property. They demanded equality in the social sphere by means of education, employment opportunities and the right to vote. During the civil war (1861-1865), little attention was paid to the women's cause and annual conventions were cancelled. It was only in 1869 that Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed the National Woman Suffrage Association. That same year Lucy Stone set up the American Woman Suffrage Association, which included both men and women in its membership, unlike the former. In 1887 several splintered women's rights organizations started to merge and evolved into the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1890. Nevertheless, it wasn't until 30 years later, in 1920, that the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution¹⁸ officially gave women the right to vote.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷ Scott, F. Anne and Andrew M. Scott. One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage. Philadelphia, 1975: 20.

¹⁸ The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

¹⁹ Scott, F. Anne and Andrew M. Scott. One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage. Philadelphia, 1975: 14 – 46.

3. Female authorship

In Gender and the Victorian Periodical, Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston claim that “the common practice of publishing articles anonymously, rather than over the signatures of individual contributors” which persisted well into the late Victorian period, served women who aspired to a writing career in two diverse ways. “On the one hand, anonymity enabled women to enter the profession of writing without having to reveal their identity and expose themselves to criticism for engaging in public discourse. On the other, it often forced them to write, if not necessarily in the style of ‘the clever college don’, favoured by the *Saturday Review*, then at best from the ‘purely masculine standpoint’ endorsed by the contributor to *Saint Pauls*.²⁰ It would not be for many years that women entering the profession of writing could free themselves of the legacy of Victorian gender ideologies.

In addition to this, John Sutherland mentions in his essay, “The Victorian Novelists”, that writing in Victorian society was a unique profession as it was open to both middle-class men and women on equal terms. “Nevertheless, given the social role forced on them, women naturally tended to be more of a modestly submerged component than their male partners. There was clearly more inhibition on women revealing themselves in the public activity of publication, hence they made more use of the pseudonymity and anonymity conventions afforded by the profession.”²¹

²⁰ Fraser, Hilary, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston. Gender and the Victorian periodical. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003: 27.

²¹ Sutherland, John. “The Victorian Novelists”, The Book History Reader. New York: Routledge, 2006: 350.

In The Haunted Study, Peter Keating introduces the figure of Olive Schreiner, a South African author, whose first and most famous work The Story of an African Farm on the treatment of women, published in 1883 under the pseudonym Ralph Iron, had a great influence on the New Woman novelist of the 1890s. He discusses her “pioneering attempt to introduce the women’s point of view into a world of fiction dominated by men [...] and her narrative method which mingles a dramatic story with heavy discussion of the wrongs suffered by women.”²² Further, he contemplates the example set by the French – the central characters of many admired French novels being women driven by a quest for greater individual freedom. As a consequence, men as well as women began to contemplate the relative lack of freedom allowed to women. “There could be no freedom for men until ‘the woman question’, as it was commonly called, was settled.”²³

In claiming that “a gap in time equivalent to a whole generation” followed an age in which women in Britain had excelled as novelists, Keating tries to convince his readers of the fact that “[d]iscussion of the attempt to develop a woman’s point of view in British fiction of [the Victorian] period is complicated by the simple fact that there were no women novelists of a literary stature remotely comparable to that of James, Conrad, Hardy, Meredith, Bennett, Wells, Gissing, or a dozen of other men.” Even though, given the rapid growth in numbers of middleclass working women, there were respectively more women publishing fiction and earning a living from it, Keating claims that “the foundations of modern fiction in Britain were [...] entirely man-made.”²⁴

In Engendering Fictions, Lyn Pykett describes the way in which female writing and reading in the late Victorian period differed from earlier writings. As opposed to what Peter Keating claims about the sudden lack of female writers and the rarity of the women’s point of view, Pykett writes that in the context of a growing sense of feminization, novels were written by women, about women and from the standpoint of women. The producers of this new type of writing were led by the figure of the New Woman and sought to identify themselves with it. “Many of the New Woman writers of the 1890s were seeking to tell a new story about women, and they sought new forms in which to do it.”²⁵ They developed personal techniques

²² Keating, Peter. The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875 – 1914. London: Martin, Secker & Warburg, 1989-90 edn.: 166.

²³ Keating, Peter. The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875 – 1914. London: Martin, Secker & Warburg, 1989-90 edn.: 168.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 175 – 176.

²⁵ Pykett, Lyn. Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century. London: Edward

and styles. Because of the Victorian conviction that the woman's place was the domestic sphere, that woman's true nature was and had always been inferior to that of men, many novels focused on the heroine's conflict between her longing for independence and freedom of choice and "the fixed identity imposed by conventional social roles."²⁶

As a result, we can conclude that there are different perspectives on women's writing opportunities at the end of the nineteenth century. The authors of Gender and the Victorian Periodical focus on the literary trend of publishing anonymously that offered a chance for women to hide their identity and thus avoid criticism, however entailing the fact that they had to write in a more masculine style that was not their own. John Sutherland agrees that women, even though the profession of writing was open on equal terms to both middle-class men and women in the late Victorian period, made more use of pseudonymity and anonymity due to the established social conventions that stigmatized women prosecuting a professional career. Peter Keating endorses the fact that more middle-class women were publishing fiction, but claims that there was still a significant lack of women writing fiction. He considers it a world still dominated by men, while Pykett, on the contrary, focuses on the increase of novels written about and by women creating their own personal style owing to the growing sense of feminization led by the figure of the New Woman. In the end, Keating remarks that it is impossible to estimate to what extent the political fight for the female cause and the energy involved "might have deflected women from a dedicated experimental career in fiction." Further he concludes that work opportunities for women should not be exaggerated as "the principal career was still marriage and family." Nevertheless, the amount of opportunities augmented, offering women a choice and "the feminist awareness served to publicise the alternatives available."²⁷

As this paper will illustrate, a result of women trying to alter their image and identity was that the notion of masculinity needed a redefinition too. Not only as a logical consequence of shifting female values, but as reaction by the male part of society that felt threatened by it and felt the need to re-establish certain ideas. The concept of masculinity that the New Woman was fighting against was the social, political and sexual behaviour that

Arnold, 1995.: 56.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁷ Keating, Peter. The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875 – 1914. London: Martin, Secker & Warburg, 1989-90 edn.: 186.

upheld patriarchal society. The fact that those women tried to subvert the male power-base resulted in the creation of empowering and frightening female creatures as Henry Haggard's 'She', Oscar Wilde's 'Salomé' or MacDonald's 'Lilith.

3.1. The new type of marriage novel

*"[m]arried life itself now becomes central to the novels and with it sexual discord and marital breakdown, which had previously only hovered impendingly on the periphery of Hardy's fiction."*²⁸ – Peter Keating

One of the conventional plotlines that was challenged by the New Woman writer was the marriage plot. To most Victorian novels, marriage was the solution to every woman's problem. Accepting the future and domestic task that was mapped out for her, she would embrace everlasting happiness. It was exactly this conviction that caused the heroine's distress and unhappiness according to the creators of the newly feminized writing. "The marriage problem was that marriage could no longer be viewed as a paradigm of harmony and happiness, or even as a necessary component of a fulfilled life."²⁹ Although the New Woman "is antithetical to the Victorian stereotypes of the proper lady and the angel in the house"³⁰, according to Jane Eldridge Miller in Rebel Women, "[b]y the Edwardian age, few educated young women could be entirely free from such doubts about marriage." A consequence of the increased level of independence experienced by more and more women is that they developed a stronger awareness of the limitations and inequalities they had to face.

As Miller explains, a new kind of novel came into being, opposing itself against the marriage novel. The so-called anti-courtship novel initially let their heroines refuse to accept

²⁸ Keating, Peter. The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875 – 1914. London: Martin, Secker & Warburg, 1989-90 edn.: 168-9.

²⁹ Miller, Jane E. Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel. London: Virago Press, 1994: 41

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

marriage as the inevitable ending of the story, they “come to realize the limitations of traditional gender roles and social conventions, and thus reject them, but [are] then unable to proceed beyond that rejection.” The heroine knows what values she is opposing, but she lacks the knowledge and authority to replace them with new and better ones. Her return to the status quo thus serves as an ironical happy ending, implicitly criticizing the lack of options for women. New Woman novelists weren’t as much interested in artistic perfection as they were in trying to break the convention that fiction was unavoidably marriage-oriented.

3.2. Utopian literature

“[T]he roots of utopia are in the literary, not the political, imagination; [...] The society to be transformed must first be known³¹. – Ann J. Lane

Another common manifestation of female writing that had as its main cause the women’s suffrage movement at the end of the nineteenth century is the utopian novel. New Women writers used the concept of Utopia to create worlds and vision that weren’t politically feasible. As Ann J. Lane writes, the utopian society was a mere imaginative creation. In it, the women pleaded more freedom, individuality and authority, however mostly in exaggerating ways. It ranged from worlds where women had the upper hand in every kind of public sphere to worlds where the male race had permanently disappeared.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote during the years of First Wave Feminism in the United States. According to what Aileen S. Krador writes in The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890 – 1920 (1965), “Mrs. Gilman argued that in savage society women who had children necessarily developed the domestic arts and the capacity for love and service while men roamed the forests, free, destructive, and irresponsible. [...] But the time came when it occurred to man that it was easier to enslave one female once and for all than to compete with other males again and again. The supremacy of man over woman began, and woman, being enslaved, could no longer get her food freely for herself and her young as

³¹ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. London: The Women’s Press, 1979.

before. Man, as the feeder of woman, became the strongest modifying force in her economic condition.”³² Gilman believed that the long ages of male dominance had caused women to become genetically inferior to men. As a reaction to this, she created a utopian social order built upon the values she identified most closely as female values in her novel Herland.

Born Mary Annette Beauchamp in Sydney, Elizabeth von Arnim, grew up in the period characterized by the first wave of feminist movements in Britain which dealt mainly with the suffrage movement. The Benefactress focuses on a conflict within the heroine between her longing for independence and the domestic life imposed on her by social convention. Her attempts to create an all-female utopian society will prove to be destined to fail.

3.2.1. The development of a genre

In The Boundaries of a Genre, Morson explains that “[f]ew studies of literary utopias have been responsible for a more general theory of literary genres. Concerned less with the identification and characterization of a class of texts than with a defence of that vaguely conceived class’s right to serious critical attention, these studies have tended to formulate what might be called ‘imperialist’ definitions of the genre – that is, definitions which annex as much territory as possible in order to protect the designated capital, the ‘classic’ Utopias³³. Given the usually low evaluation of these Utopias as literature, this defensive strategy is perhaps understandable”³⁴. Morson also provides his readers with three essential criteria that a work must satisfy if it is to be considered a literary Utopia³⁵:

- (1) it was written in the tradition of previous utopian literary works;
- (2) it depicts an ideal society;
- (3) regarded as a whole, it advocates the realization of that society.

Whatever the differences in style and substance among classic utopias, they seem to follow, more or less, one of the three models: Plato’s Republic, Thomas More’s Utopia, or

³² Kraditor, S. Aileen. Ideas of the Women Suffrage Movement, 1890 – 1920. New York, 1965: 98.

³³ Plato’s Republic (380 BC), Thomas More’s Utopia (1516) and Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis (1626) are three classic utopian masterpieces. Plato’s Republic runs on strict principles of discipline and justice. The external world in which Plato lives is re-created remarkably as it was. Both More’s Utopia and Bacon’s Atlantis attempt to alter society greatly, to create fresh institutions and relationships, and introduce entirely different habits.

³⁴ Morson, G.S. The boundaries of genre: Dostoevsky’s Diary of a writer and the traditions of literary utopia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981: 69.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

Francis Bacon's New Atlantis. These works are three of the most discussed literary Utopias to whose standards all other utopian works are usually compared. As Morson points out, utopian society is, in Thomas More's phrase, "the best state of commonwealth," one which is organized, as Plato describes in his Republic, "to secure the greatest possible happiness for the community as a whole."³⁶

Morson introduces the concept of what is called the 'delineator', a fictional character who explains the ideal society to an audience unfamiliar with this. "Generic conventions entitle the reader to assume that even though the author cannot be identified with the delineator, the author does *endorse* the delineator's values and statements of what is socially desirable."³⁷ Further, he claims that utopian novels are suited to make claims about ethics, values, and knowledge that non-utopian novels are not.³⁸

As the 'delineator' gains insight and discovers that the world is not as complex as he had expected, a utopian novel could be characterized as an epistemological story³⁹. Morson compares it with a *Bildungsroman*, as he considers the genre to be a kind of 'counter-*Bildungsroman*.⁴⁰ The main character is faced with a world that refutes a great part of his values and belief. At first, he will protest and resist, but gradually he will realize that the perfect alternative world gives an unexpected but correct answer. "It tells the story of how a questioner, who begins with untested assumptions about history, society, and human nature, comes to believe in what he had previously considered unbelievable."⁴¹

The journey that the protagonist embarks on is of an allegorical nature. As Morson explains, "[t]he questioner (who is usually a citizen of the reader's own society) finds himself, by a process recounted in the transition passage, in the ideal kingdom."⁴²

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

³⁷ Morson, G.S. The boundaries of genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a writer and the traditions of literary utopia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 198: 76.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁹ Epistemology, according to the Oxford Dictionary of English, is "[t]he theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion." Because of the 'delineator's' intellectual and emotional discoveries on his journey to Utopia, this literary genre can be categorized as an epistemological one.

⁴⁰ Morson, G.S. The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the traditions of literary utopia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981: 78.

⁴¹ Morson, G.S. The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the traditions of literary utopia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981: 187.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 85.

In The Shape of Utopia, Elliott explains that the portrayal of an ideal commonwealth has a double function when he writes that “it establishes a standard, a goal; and by virtue of its existence alone it casts a critical light on society as presently constituted.”⁴³

3.2.2. Women’s Utopia

In chapter 7 from Rees’ Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Literature, the reader gets a deeper insight into a special type of Utopias that are this paper’s main concern: women’s Utopias. Rees explains the importance of Utopia creation for female writers: “If the creation of Utopia represents a chance for any writer to escape intellectually from the limitations of an actual society and way of life, it is women writers who arguably stand in most need of such liberation.”⁴⁴ However, women’s utopian fiction has to define itself against precedents established – in this case – by male writers. Comparing their utopian writing to that of men, we can consider the possibility of whether it was feasible for women to found and sustain a politicised utopian scheme, inside or outside fiction. Rees wonders, “[...] given the all too evident constraints on women in the ‘real’ world, what does the utopian tradition have to offer beyond fantasy and wish-fulfilment?”⁴⁵ At the end of the 19th century, women still lacked the economical and political power to acquire territory or economic resources.

Because women are nurturers of the young and traditional bearers of the cultural values of love and cooperation, and because women were excluded historically from the sources of power, they are in an ideal position to create an alternative social vision. “By the early twentieth century, women also had decades of sophisticated collective action and a trained leadership to call upon. Most utopias neglect the central role of education in reconstructing their worlds. In Gilman’s work education – not formal education but the process by which values permeate an entire social fabric – evolves as a natural device in the creation of new people, especially the young.”⁴⁶ Moreover, the fact that the delineator was

⁴³ Elliott, C. Robert. The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970: 22.

⁴⁴ Rees, Christine. Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction: From Robinson Crusoe to Rasselas. London: Longman Group Limited, 1996: 205.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. New York: Dover Publications, 1998: iii-iv.

usually historically male offers a reason why feminist or female utopias were held to be necessary.

3.3. Charlotte Perkins Gilman

“Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the most influential woman thinker in the pre-World War I generation in the United States.”⁴⁷ – Aileen S. Kraditor

3.3.1 Introduction

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860 – 1935) had an insecure childhood and a disrupted education after her father’s permanent departure from his family. Her unconventional family situation had a lasting influence on her later perspective on domestic life. As the editor’s introductory note to the 1998 edition of Herland explains, “[she] had radical ideas about women’s role in the patriarchal society in which she lived, and about women’s potential to create a much healthier, happier way of living if they were free from male domination.”⁴⁸ Gilman became well-known again in 1966 after the republication of her powerful social critique Women and Economics. Its introduction further claims that “Charlotte already believed that Victorian marriage crippled women’s self-expression and prevented human progress. After the birth of her daughter, Katherine, her sense of being trapped in domestic

⁴⁷ Kraditor, S. Aileen. Ideas of the Women Suffrage Movement, 1890 – 1920. New York, 1965: 97.

⁴⁸ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. New York: Dover Publications, 1998: iii-iv.

drudgery, with no intellectual or creative life, resulted in deep depression.”⁴⁹ She left her husband and child and married a second time. Furthermore, she was deeply influenced by the utopian socialism of Edward Bellamy, an American author and socialist most famous for his utopian novel Looking Backward (1888).

In an introduction to the 1979 edition of Herland, published by the Women’s Press, Ann J. Lane articulates Gilman’s idea: “A healthy social organism for both men and women, therefore, requires the autonomy of women. That autonomy can be achieved only by women’s collective political action.”⁵⁰ She confirms Gilman’s peculiar perspective on domestic life at the end of the 19th century: “Here is a woman in late-Victorian America, denying the social definition of herself as wife and mother, first with a scandalous divorce, then by “abandoning” her child to its father, and finally by denying the very reality of home.”⁵¹ The focus of the new society in ‘Herland’ is the New Motherhood, children being the most important fact. Child-rearing is an honoured profession permitted to only highly trained specialists. Women like Gilman herself, who had difficulty with mothering, could live comfortably in such a place. As Ann J. Lane claims: “In Gilman’s work it is not the scientist, the warrior, the priest, the craftsman, but the mother, who is the connecting point from present to future. In her utopia, Charlotte Perkins Gilman transforms the private world of mother-child, isolated in the individual home, into a community of mothers and children in a socialized world. It is a world in which humane social values have been achieved by women in the interest of us all.”⁵² Gilman’s utopian writings examined the possibilities for social systems that would free women from drudgery and give them control of their bodies.

3.3.2. Herland

In 1915, Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote the socialist-feminist utopian novel Herland. The novel has originally been serialized in *The Forerunner*, a monthly feminist magazine edited and entirely written by Gilman from 1909 to 1916. This fantasy-adventure story was not published in book form until 1979. Preceded by her novel Moving the Mountain (1911)

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. London: The Women’s Press, 1979: v-vi.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. London: The Women’s Press, 1979: v-vi.

and followed with the sequel With Her in Ourland (1916), *Herland* is the middle volume in Gilman's utopian trilogy. Narrated by an observant young man inclined toward social analysis, "her unique feminist Utopia [...] suggested that women could express their love of their own and other children most fully only if freed from the straitjacket of the patriarchal nuclear family."⁵³ Gilman created an isolated society composed entirely of women who reproduce via parthenogenesis⁵⁴. The result is an ideal social order free of war, conflict and domination. The fact that her utopia succeeds anything men have built, satirizes the male gender by implying that women do not really need men and can do everything on their own. Gilman does not imply that womanhood is better than manhood as the exaggeration only serves as a means to reinforce her purpose.

It could not be taken for granted that women writing at the beginning of the 20th century had enough authority to impose and diffuse the values of an all-female utopian world. As Ann J. Lane remarks: "Several utopias have espoused the rights or exposed the plight of women – Charles Brockden Brown's *Alcuin*, published in 1798, is an early example – but few Utopias were written by women. [...] Mary E. Bradley Lane's *Mizora*, published in 1890, is the only self-consciously feminist Utopia published before *Herland* that I have been able to locate."⁵⁵

In 1979, when Ann J. Lane wrote her Herland introduction, she remarked that the utopian novel as a literary form seemed to be going through a rebirth as a uniquely feminist expression. "Many of the ideas in these books are reminiscent of notions expressed in *Herland*: class equality, some kind of communal child-rearing; absence of privilege by sex; freedom from fear of male violence, elimination of sex-linked work, the mother-child relationship and the idealized home as models for social institutions; and the use of persuasion and consensus to maintain social order. But the contemporary fictional worlds are so much in the arena of the fantastic, in the genre of science fiction, that as a new kind of feminist expression they are in important ways not comparable to the classic utopian form."⁵⁶

3.3.2.1. When three male explorers meet the inhabitants of 'Herland'

⁵³ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. New York: Dover Publications, 1998: iii-iv.

⁵⁴ Asexual reproduction.

⁵⁵ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. London: The Women's Press, 1979: v-vi.

⁵⁶ *Id.*

“I had always imagined – simply from hearing it said, I suppose – that women were by nature conservative. Yet these women, quite unassisted by any masculine spirit of enterprise, had ignored their past and built daringly for the future.”⁵⁷

In Herland, Gilman articulates her unconventional views on male-female roles and capabilities, motherhood, individuality, privacy, the sense of community and sexuality. Three male explorers, Terry O. Nicholson, Jeff Margrave and the sociologist Vandyck Jennings, in search of adventure, stumble upon ‘Herland’ hidden deep in the Amazonian jungle - “I’m not saying where, for good reasons” (46).⁵⁸ The story is told from Vandyck’s perspective so he could be what Morson referred to as the ‘delineator’. He commences his narrative validating its historic veracity:

“This is written from memory, unfortunately. If I could have brought with me the material I so carefully prepared, this would be a very different story. Whole books of notes, carefully copied records, firsthand descriptions, and the pictures – that’s the worst loss. We had some bird’s-eyes of the cities and parks; a lot of lovely views of streets, of buildings, outside and in, and some of the gorgeous gardens, and, most important of all, of the women themselves.” (1)

Increasing the story’s credibility seems to be a stylistic device to increase the importance of the content and thus Gilman’s feminist message.

Upon their arrival in ‘Herland’, the three men are overwhelmed by an unusual feeling. They suddenly felt – and were treated – like small boys doing mischief in ‘some gracious lady’s house’, like ‘straddling helpless children’, even like ‘yearling babies stripped and put to bed’ (22).

Terry O. Nicholson is Gilman’s most stereotyped creation. He represents the 19th century man who does not believe in any intellectual or physical capacity in a woman outside her domestic sphere and had an instinct to dominate. When stumbling upon these highly intellectual, independent, self-supporting women, he cannot endure this strange reversal of standards:

“I’m sick of it! he protested. Sick of the whole thing. Here we are cooped up as helpless as a bunch of three-year-old orphans, and being taught what they think is necessary – whether we like it or not. Confound their old-maid impudence!” (29)

The men had arrived in an easy assumption of superiority. Now, tamed and trained to a degree the women considered safe, they were brought out to see the country, to know the people. Jeff Margrave, on the other hand, is more feminized as he is not afraid to show his emotions and treats the women with more care and respect.

⁵⁷ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. New York: Dover Publications, 1998: 94. Hereafter cited as ‘Herland’.

⁵⁸ Vandyck about the enigmatic location of ‘Herland’.

At first sight, the women did not seem very desirable. Their short hair styles, their uncommon height, their lack of submissiveness, their progressive spirits, and their evident intellect astonished the men:

“Here you have human beings, unquestionably, but what we were slow in understanding was how these ultra-women, inheriting only from women, had eliminated not only certain masculine characteristics, which of course we did not look for, but so much of what we had always thought essentially feminine.” (49)

Nonetheless, when they got acquainted, they were impressed by the women’s virtues; “[t]hey had the evenest tempers, the most perfect patience and good nature” and one of the things most impressive about them all was “the absence of irritability” (41). Their unexpected visit did not confuse the women, nor did it make them panic. On the contrary, they finally seem prepared to allow men in their society when they ironically analyse them as follows:

“From another country. Probably men. Evidently highly civilized. Doubtless possessed of much valuable knowledge. May be dangerous. Catch them if possible; tame and train them if necessary. This may be a chance to re-establish a bi-sexual state for our people.” (75)

3.3.2.2. Critical comparison and contrast

“As I [Vandyck] learned more and more to appreciate what these women had accomplished, the less proud I was of what we, with all our manhood, had done.”⁵⁹

The novel, being a serious social and historical analysis, exposes the absurdities of accepted conventions in what Gilman calls ‘Ourworld’. Gilman applied irony as a device for social criticism, as Ann J. Lane explains: “She used the marginality forced upon her as a woman in Victorian America to shape a distinctly woman’s humour.”⁶⁰ The story examines and refutes different cases of general assumptions created and originated in ‘Ourworld’. The women, for instance, lack understanding on why the wife should take her husband’s name after marriage. In ‘Herland’ children do not even have surnames to begin with. It is their opinion that in ‘Ourworld’ individualism distorts the most intimate human relationships. Furthermore, they do not comprehend why dead bodies are put in the ground to decay, why long hair is womanly when only male lions and buffaloes have manes - “if their hair was only long”, Jeff would complain, “they would look so much more feminine” (27) -, why women with the fewest children seem to have the most servants, why a God of love and wisdom has

⁵⁹ Herland: 51.

⁶⁰ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. London: The Women’s Press, 1979: v-vi.

left a legacy of sacrifice, the devil and damnation, why ideas from thousands of years ago should be cherished and honoured, what women do all day long if they do not work, why loved pets are imprisoned by a leash and allowed to bite children and permitted to leave their waste on the streets, etc.

Besides critical but ironical remarks on behalf of the inhabitants of 'Herland', the men originating from 'Ourworld' compare their world to theirs. A striking difference is that, while dogs are the representative animals of the male world – "you know men like dogs better than women do" (45) – cats are the only pets kept in the female Utopia:

"What do you suppose these lady Burbanks had done with their cats? By the most prolonged and careful selection and exclusion they had developed a race of cats that did not sing! That's a fact. [...] Moreover, they had ceased to kill birds. They were rigorously bred to destroy mice and moles and all such enemies of the food supply; but the birds were numerous and safe." (42)

These well-bred and by no means aggressive cats stand in sharp contrast with the more violent, male dogs.

Furthermore, the meaning of the word *patriotism* seems to disappear into nothingness when compared to the affectionate and loving nature of the women living in 'Herland', where they had no wars and there was no competition:

"They loved one another with a practically universal affection, rising to exquisite and unbroken friendships, and broadening to a devotion to their country and people for which our word *patriotism* is no definition at all. Patriotism, red hot, is compatible with the existence of a neglect of national interests, a dishonesty, a cold indifference to the suffering of millions. Patriotism is largely pride, and very largely combativeness." (80 -81)

Notice that from the word *patriotism* we can derive the Latin word 'pater', which indicated the oldest male part of the family. In the story, the reader encounters more of these 'word-associations':

"When we say *men, man, manly, manhood*, and all the other masculine derivatives, we have in the background of our minds a huge vague crowded picture of the world and all its activities. To grow up and "be a man", to "act like a man" – the meaning and connotation is wide indeed. [...] And when we say *women*, we think *female* – the sex." (116 - 117)

This last sentence touches upon another central issue. Much of human behaviour turns out to be sex-oriented. According to the women of 'Herland', 'Femininity' is a creation meant to satisfy men's wishes, 'Sexuality' is not biological but cultural. According to Ann J. Lane, "Gilman was not alone among feminists in asserting that the strategy of sexual freedom led to

another form of female subordination”⁶¹. In her novel, she lets Vandyck convert and discover that sexual pleasure becomes simply a part of his larger feeling.

As a means of social critique, a common feature of Gilman’s story is gender reversal. She seems to claim that the notion of ‘gender’ is socially constructed as its established characteristics are being abolished. As previously mentioned, the mothers of ‘Herland’ are strong, independent beings with short hair and masculine qualities and some are even physically stronger than men while the three male characters’ hair grows long and one of them tends to be more feminine in dealing with his feelings.

3.3.2.3. Men as an opposing and destructive force

“Nothing irritated Terry more than to have us assume that there were no men; but there were no signs of them in the books they gave us, or the pictures.”⁶²

The women in ‘Herland’ deliberately chose a world without men. Two thousand years of one continuous culture without men and before that only traditions of the harem. To them, men simply meant corruption. In a world without a corruptive force, they are free from social, physical, mental and sexual domination and subordination. The unexpected presence of men, who bring along their own perspectives and attitudes, causes great indignation on the part of the women:

“And I [Vandyck] could see, just in snatches, of course, how his [Terry’s] suave and masterful approach seemed to irritate them; his too-intimate glances were vaguely resented, his compliments puzzled and annoyed. Sometimes a girl would flush, not with drooped eyelids and inviting timidity, but with anger and a quick lift of the head. Girl after girl turned on her heel and left him, till he had but a small ring of questioners, and they, visibly, were the least “girlish” of the lot.” (73)

According to Terry, these women need to be overpowered, “[t]here never was a woman yet that did not enjoy being mastered” (111). Above all, he abominates the way these women developed intellectually. Trying to impose his conviction onto his female friend Alima, he experienced difficulties:

⁶¹ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. London: The Women’s Press, 1979: v-vi.

⁶² Herland: 38.

- “Terry put in practice his pet conviction that a woman loves to be mastered, and by sheer brute force, in all the pride and passion of his intense masculinity, he tried to master this women. It did not work.”
- “Alima was in a cold fury. She wanted to kill him – actually.” (113)

Gilman also included a vice that up to now was unfamiliar to these women, but arose owing to the presence of men: “[Ellador] was at first, for a brief moment, envious of her friend – a thought she put away from her at once and forever” (119). Nevertheless, this was the only instance found in the story and Gilman makes clear that the feeling will never surmount again, it has no place in ‘Herland’.

3.3.2.4. An epistemological utopian story

Gilman’s utopian aims are summarized in Ann J. Lane’s following statement: “The mission of a Utopia is to provide a speculative vision of the desired goal of human existence. Most Utopias create new social structures to embody those ends. Gilman’s concern, however, is primarily with human consciousness – what the people will look like and do, how and why they are different and better. The physical world is a natural creation of these new people.”⁶³

The explorers’ speculations on the outlook and the nature of the women of an ‘isolated valley’⁶⁴ which is called ‘Herland’, are deviating from each other and from reality. In this ‘physical’ world that needs to represent ‘these new people’ with high ideals, everything was “beauty, order, perfect cleanness, and the pleasantest sense of home over it all” (16). Gilman offers concrete answers and describes everything they see and touch as solid, strong, simple in structure, comfortable in use and also, incidentally, beautiful.

As mentioned previously by Morson, the story of Herland can be described as an epistemological work. The characters of the novel, especially the delineator, gain a clear insight into the values and ethics of ‘Herland’. That what they previously considered indisputable, now suddenly becomes open to question. Their expectations conflict with their

⁶³ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. London: The Women’s Press, 1979: v-vi.

⁶⁴ It appeared to be well forested about the edges, but in the interior there were wide plains, and everywhere parklike meadows and open places.

experiences. On their journey, they fantasize about and speculate on the appearance of the women and the country. The sociologist Vandyck Jennings talks about the well-known physiological limitations of women, when he says: “But they look – why, this is a *civilized* country! [...] There must be men” (10). Also intellectually, their expectations are low as they “have assumed, as a matter of course, that women had none [initiative]; that only the man, with his natural energy and impatience of restriction, would ever invent anything” (87). Confident that they are going to run into very limited beings, they encounter strong, confident women.

Together, they speculate on the composition of this feminine society: “They would fight among themselves”, Terry insisted. “Women always do. We mustn’t look to find any sort of order and organization.” “You’re dead wrong”, Jeff told him. “It will be like a nunnery under an abbess – a peaceful, harmonious sisterhood” (7). And on the appearance of the country: “Jeff was a tender soul. I think that he thought that country – if there was one – was just blossoming with roses and babies and canaries and tidies, and all that sort of thing. And Terry, in his secret heart, had visions of a sort of sublimated summer resort [...]” (6).

Owing to the dismissal of their general assumptions, these three young men could be portrayed as the protagonists of an anti-*Bildungsroman*. What they expected was a replica of their own world where they apply the same laws and values. Surprisingly, they discovered a kind of utopian world controlled by ethics unfamiliar to them:

“We had expected a dull submissive monotony, and found a daring social inventiveness far beyond our own, and a mechanical and scientific development fully equal to ours. We had expected pettiness, and found a social consciousness beside which our nations looked like quarrelling children – feeble-minded ones at that. We had expected jealousy, and found a broad sisterly affection, a fair-minded intelligence, to which we could produce no parallel. We had expected hysteria, and found a standard of health and vigor, a calmness of temper, to which the habit of profanity, for instance, was impossible to explain – we tried it. (69)

The women, who are the only human beings inhabiting this country, have no understanding of the words ‘home’, ‘wife’ or ‘lover’. Even the marital ceremony arranged between the protagonists and three of these women has no real meaning due to the lack of the ladies’ understanding of the significance. The men are unable to impose their ideas onto this society.

As being an active writer during the First Wave Feminism in the United States, Gilman created the imaginative, utopian world 'Herland' as a reaction against women's alleged inferiority to men. In this ideal society, men are extinct and women are independent and rulers of a perfect world. Gilman intentionally chose three men as the explorers of the unknown country of whom one, being a sociologist, serves as a neutral, nevertheless male, observer who can critically evaluate and compare the new world's values to his own. His position as a focalizer enabled Gilman to convey a seemingly plausible message. The persuasive tone of the women in 'Herland' when explaining the values of their world and the stressing of the story's veracity at the beginning increase the Utopia's degree of supposed truthfulness. The remaining male characters serve a feministic cause as well. The one who represents a stereotypical masochistic male of the 19th century gets rejected by the inhabitants of 'Herland', while the more feminized version of a man can easily integrate.

The tone of Herland is undoubtedly ironic. Gilman mocks certain established conventions and invents new ones that appear to make more sense. By means of this particular type of humour, she seems to make her utopian values self-evident in a light-hearted manner. Presenting this adventure as an epistemological story, the eventual conclusions the characters took from their experiences – in favour of the more feminized society – are perceived as indisputably true.

3.4. Elizabeth von Arnim

3.4.1. Introduction

When she was three years old, Elizabeth von Arnim (1866 – 1941) and her family removed to England where she was raised and had a good middle-class day-school education. By marriage she became Countess von Arnim and lived in Berlin with her first husband. After his early death, she had an affair with H.G. Wells, but when she asked for a more serious relationship, he refused. In the introduction to the 1986 edition of Elizabeth's novel The Enchanted April (1922), Terence de Vere White further comments on von Arnim's relationships when he writes that "[w]hen Elizabeth broke with Wells, Lord Russell had,

literally, walked into her life up the slippery path to her chalet. He was probably the only man who aroused physical passion in her, but he had a bad record with wives, and he made Elizabeth very unhappy while he continued to dominate her.” After a painful separation, Elizabeth escaped to the United States and according to White she let one more man into her life, “one of her children’s tutors had pursued her respectfully for years, but he was eventually shaken off.”⁶⁵

The publication of her first novel, Elizabeth and Her German Garden (1989) was very successful. According to Alison Hennegan, writer of the essay “In a Class of Her Own: Elizabeth von Arnim”, critics claim that Elizabeth “had too keen a sense of literary fashion and the marketplace for her own artistic good. [...] That *The Benefactress* (1901), her first unambiguously fictional work, in which a young, English-raised, Anglo-German woman inherits an estate in Germany and tries, unsuccessfully, to establish an all-female philanthropic community, exploits, safely, the turn-of-the-century taste for feminist Utopias – the ‘new woman’ novel meets *Millenium Hall*⁶⁶, perhaps.”

Defending von Arnim’s purpose, Hennegan calls her understanding “an enviably keen sense of the *Zeitgeist*. [...] If she had an acute sense of the shifts and vagaries of the public feeling and literary fashion, it came in part from her own position, in but not of English and European society. Onlookers, notoriously, see most of the game. [...] Elizabeth, as she was invariably known after 1898, was, on various counts, an outsider for most of her life: a colonial at the heart of Empire; a British bride in Junker Germany; the widow of a German Baron remarried into British aristocracy during the Great War, [...]”⁶⁷

Hennegan noticed several major issues that preoccupied von Arnim for much of her life: “male tyranny over women, practised domestically, sanctioned socially and culturally, [...], subordination and spiritual enslavement, particularly for women; the existence of women as a class; and what one might call the ‘economy of female beauty’. Some of these preoccupations emerged from her own experience. Widespread German contempt for women, for example, of the sort her *Benefactress* experiences at the hand of her loathsome estate

⁶⁵ Von Arnim, Elizabeth. The Enchanted April. London: Virago Press, 1986: introduction, v-xiii.

⁶⁶ Rees, Christine. Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction: From Robinson Crusoe to Rasselas. London: Longman Group Limited, 1996: 216. A separatist female utopia assimilating the utopian genre to the novel of formal realism, written by Sarah Scott in 1762.

⁶⁷ Hennegan, Alison. “In a Class of Her Own: Elizabeth von Arnim”, Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998: 101.

Manager [...] Elizabeth had experienced in Berlin and in Pomerania where she and her German first husband eventually moved to care for his family estate, Nassenheide.”⁶⁸

She wrote frequently about unhappy and unsatisfying marriages and woman’s desire to choose her own future. In Rebel Women, Jane Eldridge Miller writes about “the concept of the indissolubility of marriage” when she describes it as “a powerful and deeply rooted one in British society, especially for women, conservative sexual morality and traditional romantic ideals taught women that they should have but one true love, to whom they should remain committed for life.”⁶⁹ Von Arnim chose to write about women’s desire for economic independence and work outside the home and “rejected the social and novelistic traditions which placed romantic desire as the dominant desire in a woman’s life.” She focused on the personal conflict within her heroines between the need for independence and social achievements in their lives and the “ideal of wifely submission and self-sacrifice”. These heroines did not live up to the classical image of the New Woman as they were “ordinary, fallible and recognizable.”⁷⁰

3.4.2. The Benefactress

Written in 1909, The Benefactress can be seen as a product of the turn-of-the-century taste for feminist Utopias. Nonetheless, the evident failure of the creation of a philanthropic all-female community and the subsequent marital agreement between Anna Estcourt, the benefactress, and her male suitor, seem to be an endorsing of the norms and values of aristocratic and upper-class lives. The features and tone of her characters’ discourse, on the other hand, need to be interpreted ironically and so does the ending of her novel.

3.4.2.1. Marriage as an impediment to independence

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶⁹ Miller, Jane E. Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel. London: Virago Press, 1994: 70.

⁷⁰ Miller, Jane E. Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel. London: Virago Press, 1994: 73.

Even if tough marriage and domestic life were two reasons for women's sense of entrapment and unhappiness at the end of the 19th century, Elizabeth von Arnim emphasizes, nevertheless ironically, the importance of marriage as a social convention. Sir Peter Estcourt of the Devonshire Estcourts, Anna's brother, is married to Susie Dobbs of Birmingham. He married her for her money and she married him for his name and social status. The nature of their marriage and social conduct is a reversal of what used to be the custom in the late Victorian period. He is a withdrawn philosopher and she is the one engaging in social activities and thus pushing Anna to find a rich husband of good position. Anna's careless attitude and her strong longing for independence make her life under Susie's control unbearable: "she was expected to be nice to every man with money, [she hated] the intolerableness of the life she was leading, and the superior attractions of crossing-sweeping as a means of earning a livelihood."⁷¹ Even according to her own brother, "every woman ought to have a home of her own, and a husband and children" (5). When Anna's German uncle, Uncle Joachim, comes to visit her in England, she pours out her heart but the response is once again negative:

"For a woman it is the one life," said Uncle Joachim with great decision. "Talk not to me of independence. Such words are not for the lips of girls. It is a woman's pride to lean on a good husband. It is her happiness to be shielded and protected by him. Outside the narrow circle of her home, for her happiness is not. The women who never marries has missed all things." (18)

This apparently studied, stiff discourse that Uncle Joachim produces, conveys a sense of irony and implicit disapproval. The exaggerated message he communicates seems to ridicule its content. Von Arnim appears to mock the narrow-mindedness that characterised her time. Contrary to what Uncle Joachim proclaims, von Arnim considered marriage to be an impediment to her own happiness.

Later in the narrative, even a female voice endorses the value and importance of marrying and supporting one's husband as she was "convinced of the superiority of marriage, as a means of real happiness for a woman, over any and every other form of occupation" (243) and considers "[t]he only plan a sensible young woman ought to make is to get as good a husband as possible as quickly as she can" (275).

As a consequence of her independent nature, Anna "objected more and more decidedly to Susie's strenuous private matrimonial urgings, and sometimes made remarks of a cynical

⁷¹ Von Arnim, Elizabeth. The Benefactress. London: Macmillan and Co, 1901: 3. Hereafter cited as 'The Benefactress'.

nature to her admirers, who took fright at such symptoms of advancing age, and fell of considerably in numbers” (3). Alison Hennegan remarks that “Elizabeth saw as clearly as Woolf that certain sorts of freedom – of thought, of choice, of action – are virtually dependent upon economic autonomy. As she writes of Anna Estcourt, the heroine of *The Benefactress*, a young woman entirely dependent on her wealthy sister-in-law’s bounty.”⁷² Anna resented her position of dependence on Susie, and she resented the fact that the only way to get out of it was to marry. She was bored with convention and considered the life that she was leading aimless and useless. “And then the people they knew – the everlasting sameness of them, content to go to the same dull round forever” (9).

Anna feels surrounded by a money-centred society and decides that she wants to aid several women who are financially dependent on a man – or are left poor after his death – and thus limited in freedom and happiness by providing them a home and support for free. The estate in Germany that she inherited from her uncle is the ideal location to receive these women. When Anna selected the first three ladies, Frau van Treumann, Fraulein Kuhrauber and Baroness Elmreich, it already seemed to go wrong. For two of them social disgrace and degradation is worse than death. “My dear Anna”, said Frau von Treumann testily, “it is out of the question that ladies of birth and breeding should tolerate her [Fraulein Kuhrauber, who is of lower birth]” (347). The importance of their social status and their subsequent pride impedes them from enjoying life in Anna’s constructed utopian community.

3.4.2.2. A utopian endeavour failing

The story is told from Anna Estcourt’s perspective. The reader gets acquainted with her thoughts and ideas that will be crucial to the utopian endeavour. She is also identifiable as the ‘delineator’⁷³ since her understanding of how a utopian settlement develops and works informs the reader. To her, the German estate at Kleinwalde that she inherited represents everything that is contradictory to her life in England. The emphasis on the picturesque, the nature and fertility are oppositions to values like money and social status:

⁷² Hennegan, Alison. “In a Class of Her Own: Elizabeth von Arnim”, Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998: 103-104.

⁷³ Morson, G.S. The boundaries of genre: Dostoevsky’s Diary of a writer and the traditions of literary utopia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981: 76.

“She pictured herself waking up in one of those unadorned beds with the morning sun shining on her face, and rising to go her daily round of usefulness in her quiet house, where there would be no quarrels, and no pitiful ambitions, and none of those many bitter heartaches that need never be.” (80)

Away from her suffocating life in England, she finally feels free. Now she’s completely independent and without social obligations:

“Complete freedom from the wearisome obligations of society, an ideal privacy surrounded by her woods and the water, a scanty population of simple and devoted people – [...] – every day spent here would be a day that made her better – that would bring her nearer to that heaven in which all good and simple souls dwelt while still on earth, the heaven of a serene and quiet mind.” (95)

She prepares the house for the arrival of the first ladies that she has chosen. She repaints the house and to her, the whitewash “is purity itself. It will be symbolical of the innocence and cleanliness that will be in our hearts when we have got used to each other, and are happy” (154).

But very soon the tide is turning. Even before she ever welcomed any prejudiced woman in her house, the male superiority over females obstructs Anna’s plans. The estate manager, Dellwig, regards her as “nothing but a woman, born to help and serve, never by any possibility even equal to a clever man like himself” (84). To him, ‘this weak female’ (85) had no sort of right. He is completely astonished by her independent attitude:

“The women of his acquaintance were, he was certain, worth individually fifty such affected, indifferent young ladies. They worked early and late to make their husbands comfortable; they were well practised in every art required of women living in the country; they were models of thrift and diligence; yet, with all their virtues and all their accomplishments, they never dreamed of lounging or not listening when a man was speaking, but sat attentively on the edge of their chairs, straight in the back and seemly, and when he had finished said *Jawohl*.” (85)

In focalizing Dellwig’s point of view, von Arnim finds another opportunity to exaggerate and ridicule convictions that she despised. The implicit use of irony causes a sense of mockery and as a consequence diminishes what Dellwig represents.

It seems that the conviction that the most superior woman was not equal to the average man and that when you removed advantages of birth or position or wealth, she would be only a woman, a creature made to be conquered and brought into obedience to man, was a well-established shibboleth in conservative rural Germany at the turn of the 20th century.

Apart from the disillusionment brought by men who want to control Anna, chaos and confusion is caused by men who want to conquer her. Herr von Lohm, the owner of the nearest estate, insists upon marrying her, while Karlchen, Frau von Treumann's son, wants to marry her for her money in order to relieve him of his debts. Herr Klutz, Anna's niece's tutor, had feelings for her and out of jealousy he set Herr von Lohm's stables on fire. It is clear that Anna's paradise was disrupted by men and by the other women's worries about social status.

Towards the end of the story, Anna experiences a radical transformation. All the trouble she went through to gain her independence and the ultimate destructive result have made Anna realize that there is something unnatural about her desires, that she still lacks something significant:

"I always thought it would be glorious to be independent, said Anna, and now somehow it isn't. It is tiring. I want someone to tell me what I ought to do, and to see that I do it. Besides petting me. I long and long sometimes to be petted." (373)

Life had grown suddenly simple, she changes her attitude, falls in love with Herr von Lohm and decides to marry him after all.

In the last chapter, which Elizabeth named 'Conclusion', Manske, the parson, concludes that "[...] all females are best married. [...] the flesh of females is very weak. It cannot stand alone. It cannot realise the aspirations formed by its own spirit. It requires constant guidance" (416). Von Arnim ultimately confirms the social conventions after destroying Anna's utopian endeavours, which makes her story morally ambiguous. Even though she was quite aware that such a utopian experiment could not work, she indicates that the direct causes of its failure were also at fault.

The sarcastic undertone and exaggeration of this 'conclusion' and of several discourses concerning marriage and the role of women, were von Arnim's mode to implicitly criticize the convictions that feminist movements in her time were fighting against.

3.5. Comparative conclusion

Two-thirds of all utopias were written in the nineteenth century, when the world was in the process of visible and enormous change. Utopias created in the wake of capitalist growth and disorder were often seen as a call to action, both by their creators and their followers.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's perspective was clearly shaped by her family situation. Being abandoned by her father and the subsequent tragedy was probably one of the first incidents that made her decide that women had a chance to be happier if they were free from male domination. As previously mentioned, it was her conviction that "Victorian marriage crippled self-expression and prevented human progress."⁷⁴ Her utopian novel Herland is an explicit example of the author endorsing the 'delineator's' ideas, as her representative male character Vandyck Jennings ultimately recognizes and fully agrees with the advantages of the all-female society's ethics and values. An important aspect of the novel's content, also taken from her own experience, is the denial of the reality of home. Gilman provides various concrete answers to the social problem and one of them is that child-rearing should be only performed by highly specialized women. This way, women like herself who found this role impossible or unnatural would be released from what she considered a burden. In The Benefactress, on the other hand, Elizabeth von Arnim's troubled and unsatisfactory relationships with dominating men did not prevent her from – sarcastically – emphasizing the importance of marriage as a social convention. This delineator's strong desire for gaining independence and aiding other unlucky women probably corresponds more to the author's personal ideas.

Both women wrote during and were obviously influenced by the first feminist suffrage movement. In the United States as well as in the United Kingdom, there was a conviction that political action and the obtaining of the right to vote would increase the autonomy of women. Some critics claim that von Arnim's motives for attempting to create a Utopia were not entirely literary or social. They are convinced that she went along with and capitalized a social movement. But why would she enact the failing of a philanthropic all-female society if it was her supposed aim to satisfy the feminist's desires and thus sell her novel more widely? Gilman understood that a male viewpoint facilitates the expression of prejudiced opinions against the ethics of 'Herland'. Nevertheless, having the characteristics of an epistemological narrative, the story convinced the delineator of the intellectual and physical capacity of

⁷⁴ Gilman, Charlotte P. Herland. New York: Dover Publications, 1998: iii-iv.

women who live free from male superiority and domination. In 'Herland', there are no wars, there is no corruption or poverty; this is the desired goal of human existence.

Both Gilman and von Arnim employed humour as a feminist device to constitute their social and historical critique. The former to make the values of 'Herland' sound self-evident and the latter to satirize established conventions. The conviction that economic autonomy is a necessary ingredient for women to be happy on the one side, and the conflicting belief that submitting to social conventions is ultimately the best solution on the other, make von Arnim's novel ironically ambiguous.

According to Morson's standards, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Herland can fully be categorized as a utopian novel as it was written in the tradition of previous utopian works, depicts an ideal and in most cases enclosed society and clearly advocates the realization of that society⁷⁵. Elizabeth von Arnim's The Benefactress, on the other hand, certainly does not satisfy the third criterion. Nevertheless, both novels explicitly contain a feminist message against the domination of the male part of society at the end of the nineteenth century.

4. Male writings

4.1. Fear and response

The emergence of organised feminism in the mid-nineteenth century and the arrival of a new kind of feminine novel produced fear and opposing action on the part of the male part of society.⁷⁶ The figure and ideas of the New Woman were considered to be a threat to the stability of the social order. The development of the novel was seen as a 'masculine form' of

⁷⁵ Morson, G.S. The boundaries of genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a writer and the traditions of literary utopia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981: 76.

⁷⁶ The role of the press and periodicals at the end of the nineteenth century was of utmost importance as it created and adjusted the image of masculinities and femininities. In Gender and the Victorian Periodical, Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston argue that "the periodical press was a major sphere for the working out of social attitude towards women, a subject that received intense, even at times disproportionate attention by both supporters and attackers of women's rights" (101). However, as the press, capable to embody multiple standpoints, was a means for men to criticise and ridicule the image of the New Woman, it was an important way of expressing and conveying the feminists' standpoint as well. A logical consequence was that the press served as one of the most significant means to convey evolving representations of both femininity and masculinity.

art, now threatened by the supposedly moralistic and progressive women writers and readers. What John Tosh claims in Manliness and Masculinities about “[l]ate nineteenth-century culture [being] permeated by images which expressed a fear of female power”⁷⁷ is endorsed by Elaine Showalter in Sexual Anarchy when she writes that “[i]n revolutionary periods, the fear of social and political equality between the sexes had always generated strenuous counter-efforts to shore up borderlines by establishing scientific proof for the absolute mental and physical differences between men and women.”⁷⁸

The masculine redefinition of fiction in the early twentieth century took many different forms. Whatever form they took, most of the major developments in writing by men at the turn of the century can be seen as a reaction to one or other aspect of the feminization of fiction. According to John Tosh, “[a]s Elaine Showalter has pointed out, the novels of masculine quest in the 1880s and the 1890s, like those of Rudyard Kipling, Rider Haggard and Joseph Conrad, expressed acute fears of ‘manly decline in the face of female power’.” Male identity and novel writing had to redefine itself under the changing circumstances, “as Peter Gay has argued, the more strident tone of manly discourse towards the end of the century was, in part at least, a defence mechanism designed to bolster men against increasing female intrusion into ‘their’ sphere.”⁷⁹ Power relations between women and men were the essence of most part of late nineteenth-century novels.

4.1.1. Imperialist literature and the male romance

Focussing on the historical context of imperialism and colonization appeared to be a widespread way to reinforce ‘masculinity’ in novel writing. The term ‘imperialist’ literature covers a group of fictions appearing in Britain between the 1880s and the 1920s, which dedicated to narrating adventure in colonial settings. In T.O. Lloyd’s The British Empire the necessary steps to come to a general understanding of the development of the British Empire are displayed. It is generally accepted that the empire officially started developing in 1558. By 1848, in the mid-nineteenth century, the empire had come to, what Lloyd calls, a “Victorian

⁷⁷ Tosh, J. Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire. Harlow: Longman, 2005: 118.

⁷⁸ Showalter, Elaine. Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle. London: Virago Press, 1992: 8.

⁷⁹ Tosh, J. Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire. Harlow: Longman, 2005: 118.

stability.” As he explains, “Britain’s interest in her colonies was unusually low in the mid-nineteenth century. Occasionally it was suggested that it might be a prudent, or at least a thrifty, step to give them up and, while there was no real likelihood that this would happen, it was a period in which imperial expansion was certainly not going to be encouraged in London and was not much in favour in the colonies either.”⁸⁰ It seemed like by that time, Britain had gained enough territory that it did not feel obliged to incessantly acquire new land. By the end of the 1860s, new technology and a shift towards a version of Darwinism thinking stimulated British men anew as it “encouraged the strong to think that their strength was in itself a proof that they were morally entitled to take over the territory of the weak.”⁸¹ This imperial enthusiasm, according to Lloyd, took two different forms: “enthusiasm for closer relationships between Britain and the self-governing colonies most of whose inhabitants were of British descent, and also enthusiasm for expansion by the acquisition of new territory.”⁸² In 1899, the British defeats in the Second Boer War between the British Empire and two independent Boer Republics, the Orange Free State and the South African Republic, “marked the end of a period of territorial expansion of the empire, and led to a time of imperial rethinking and reorganization, [...] but they did not lead to any suggestion of imperial withdrawal.”⁸³ The desire to preserve the manliness of the imperial race and discourage the feminization of society was stimulated by the dishonourable episode of the Boer War.

Notwithstanding the historical context and colonial setting, as Wendy R. Katz claims in Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire, “[m]any romance heroes of the late nineteenth century, Haggard’s included, often have no explicit links to Empire. Their connection is felt rather than intellectualized and depends in a fervid preoccupation with manhood and an insistent emphasis on the virtues of strength and valour.”⁸⁴

Concerning the actual occurrence of women in these stories, they are either absent altogether or represent a male Victorian anxiety about female power and sexuality. A common feature of imperialist literature are the descriptions of landscape as female body that is being penetrated and conquered. In her essay “’Scaping the Body: Of Cannibal Mother and Colonial Landscapes”, Rebecca Stott claims that these kind of descriptions are not a specific

⁸⁰ Lloyd, T.O. The British Empire, 1558 – 1983. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996: 171.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 219.

⁸³ Lloyd, T.O. The British Empire, 1558 – 1983. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996: 253.

⁸⁴ Katz, Wendy R. Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987: 59.

characteristic of the late nineteenth century as she writes that “[t]hey are part of a Culture/Nature binary embedded in Western thought in which nature plays female to a masculinised culture.” Further she explains that the hero of the story, most of the time a tale of adventure, casts himself in a kind of sexual relationship to the landscape to secure his powerful status. “In such a narrative the landscape plays the role of the virginal female body waiting to be taken.” This female body can take on different shapes, regarding which Western mythical and stereotypical model of femininity is applied. “Africa might be constructed as virgin territory (passive, fertile, untouched by others, unknowing) or *femme fatale* (dangerously seductive, potentially violent, unpredictable, all knowing), or monstrous mother (sexually knowing, malevolent and cannibalistic) and in some adventure narratives mythologized ‘Africa’ is characterized by wild swings between the different types.”⁸⁵

In *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1979), Martin Green talks about two other motifs recurring in adventure fiction: “the hideous temples of human sacrifice, and their grinning idols and the black-garbed priests running to and fro overhead during the battles.”⁸⁶

This type of writing revealed itself particularly in one genre: the male romance. As previously mentioned, the purpose of the renewal of the ‘masculine’ novel in the last decades of the nineteenth century was to renovate or reinvigorate fiction that resisted the New Woman novel. Mentioned by Lyn Pykett in her *Engendering Fictions*, the aim of the male romance in the 1880s was “to provide a solution to the problem posed in H. Rider Haggard’s question ‘Why do *men* hardly ever read a novel?’. He intended to reclaim the English novel for male writers. “The result was the development by Rider Haggard, [...] of a masculinist aesthetic of the adventure story, centring on action rather than on reflection and introspection, and on codes of male honour, which were to serve as bulwarks against degenerative feminization.”⁸⁷ As this paper will illustrate, Haggard’s *She* (1887), a utopian adventure tale that worships female beauty, nonetheless proves to be partly misogynistic as a reaction against female power and sexuality. Additionally, Pykett considers the act of ‘going native’, a persistent theme of male romance. White savages were always regarded superior to the more dark-skinned savages, as the latter were seen as more feminized, primitive races. “But there was

⁸⁵ Stott, Rebecca. “‘Scaping the Body: Of Cannibal Mother and Colonial Landscapes’”, *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*. Houndmills New York: Palgrave, 2002: 151.

⁸⁶ Green, Martin. *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980: 348.

⁸⁷ Pykett, Lyn. *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*. London: Edward Arnold, 1995: 67.

always the fear that the white savage would revert to the condition of, or be seduced by, the dark one.”⁸⁸ This fear of ‘the dark one’ symbolizes the fear of female power.

4.1.2. Utopian depiction of women

Despite the popularity of the utopian vision in novels written by women, the genre had remained a predominantly male domain and had gone through a revival at the fin-de-siècle. Manifesting itself in different perceptions and world visions, the utopian genre in general could be considered as another male reaction against the rise of the New Woman, her progressive ideas and imaginary expressions. While for women the genre was a way to reveal alternative social relations between the sexes, for men it was a means to re-establish and emphasize women’s domestic roles or to create a frightening image of the empowering woman.

In The Boundaries of Genre, Morson comments on the status of women in utopian fiction throughout the centuries. He asserts that since the origin of the utopian genre, authors have “implicitly and explicitly criticized each other’s understanding of the proper status of women.”⁸⁹ This inter-textual dialogue started when in Socrates’ Republic, he pleaded the equality between the sexes when he wrote that the only difference between man and woman was that the male begets and the female brings forth. According to Morson, “[a]lways a concern of utopias, the status of women has become a particularly controversial one in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” As a reaction to recent developments, utopian writers that were “willing to abolish private property, prisons, and police, become [conservative] when they consider family life and the occupations of women outside the home.”⁹⁰

In chapter 7 from Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-century Literature, Rees claims that “[b]efore the advent of the novel, the writers of utopias are in any case unaccustomed to entertaining the idea of the individual point of view, let alone identifying a distinctive female viewpoint: consequently, they are prone to generalize too readily on the basis of gender.” Consequently, the woman is seen as “a set of reproductive organs” as it is her nature to

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁸⁹ Morson, G.S. The boundaries of genre: Dostoevsky’s Diary of a writer and the traditions of literary utopia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981: 79.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

produce children who will be the future citizens. Nevertheless, this function makes her of “central rather than marginal importance in the ideal state.” Classical and Renaissance utopian writers invented ways to involve women in political activity, but they couldn’t get round the specific sexual functions that were embedded in society’s mind and “they [found] it very hard to imagine genuine power-sharing.” Even when, in early utopian writings, women were given equal educational and political rights, the outcome would be dissatisfying. Men didn’t necessarily appreciate the consequences of liberated female minds and the effects they had on “their reproductive policies, or the attitude to marriage where that applies.”⁹¹ Women’s need to alter the established social order would turn out the exact same concern of some late nineteenth-century male writers.

As Morson continues explaining, in 1888, Edward Bellamy managed to create a compromise that satisfied his state of mind. In Looking Backward he created a world for women that “restricts them to special, less demanding occupations and to conditions of work that neither compromise their femininity nor unduly limit their time in the home.” Two years later, in 1890, William Morris designed a world that was more domestically conservative as “the principal improvement in women’s status in this utopia is greater public recognition of the importance of housework and childrearing.” Even far in the twentieth century, B.F. Skinner’s Walden Two (1948) opposed the nineteenth-century feminist suggestions that intelligent women be liberated from domestic work and childrearing as “[t]he status of women [was] improved, in part, by more efficient methods of housework.”⁹² This upgrading of the domestic task by improving women’s opportunities was nothing more than a fearful reaction against woman’s desire to engage in a public life.

As previously mentioned and endorsed by Rees, “[a]nother option for those wishing to escape the domestic utopia altogether is a remaking of the political utopia, to centre on female power rather than male.” Inquisitive male travellers, exotic empires and inhumanly powerful empresses that inspired awe and fear were common ingredients for critical novels that functioned as satires. “[M]ale writers attempt by parody to exorcise the perceived threat, not just of women’s sexuality, but of their capacity for collective organisation.” Additionally, Rees claims that “[t]he allocating of such dazzling roles to the allegedly weaker sex is of

⁹¹ Rees, Christine. Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction: From Robinson Crusoe to Rasselas. London: Longman Group Limited, 1996: 206.

⁹² Morson, G.S. The boundaries of genre: Dostoevsky’s Diary of a writer and the traditions of literary utopia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981: 80.

course commonplace in the romance genre.”⁹³ As this paper will subsequently illustrate, Henry Rider Haggard’s imperialist romances She and Ayesha: The Return of the She will be considered as belonging to the latter utopian genre.

4.2. Henry Rider Haggard (1856 – 1925)

4.2.1. Life and work

Sir Henry Rider Haggard, had lived, worked and written during the heyday of the British empire. Born in 1856 at Bradenham in Norfolk, he grew up in a world dominated by growing feministic concerns and the rise of the New Woman on the one hand and values of imperialism and colonialism on the other. Haggard was married and the father of three children. A significant moment in his life that will have a lasting influence on his career was in 1875, when “[h]e was fortunate enough to secure a post on the staff of Sir Henry Bulwer, Lieutenant-Governor of Natal Province, South Africa.”⁹⁴ As Martin Green informs us in Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire, when England annexed the Transvaal in 1877, “it was Haggard who ran up the Union Jack there”⁹⁵ and thus became the Master of the High Court of the Transvaal. He travelled extensively and “set sail for South Africa and spent six years there, fascinated by its landscape, wildlife, tribal society and mysterious past.”⁹⁶ As Green claims, “Haggard was deeply impressed with both the grandeur and the savagery of tribal life, and felt them to be in some sense truer than the civilized ideas of Victorian England.”⁹⁷ Influenced by his personal life and experiences, he wrote adventurous romances set in far-off corners of the world. He was great friends with and let him inspire by his world-wide known contemporary Rudyard Kipling (1865 – 1936).

⁹³ Rees, Christine. Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction: From Robinson Crusoe to Rasselas. London: Longman Group Limited, 1996: 207.

⁹⁴ Haggard, R. Henry. She. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995: Introduction.

⁹⁵ Green, Martin. Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980: 229.

⁹⁶ Haggard, R. Henry. She. London: the Penguin Group, 1994: Introduction.

⁹⁷ Green, Martin. Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980: 230.

4.2.1.1. Haggard's imperialistic romances

In Wendy R. Katz's Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire, she writes about Horace G. Hutchinson's commentary when he reviewed Haggard's autobiography The Days of My Life (1926). She claims that he wrote the following on Haggard's influence on young men in Britain: "it is not to be doubted that [Haggard's] South African romances filled many a young fellow with longing to go into the wide spaced of those lands and see their marvels for himself, and have thus aided far more than we can ever know in bringing British settlers and influence into the new country. They have helped to accomplish the dreams and aims of Rhodes."⁹⁸

Other than Haggard, it is known that the Empire figures significantly in the works of Kipling, Conrad, Conan Doyle, John Buchan and many others. These authors introduced the features and traditions of colonial lands such as South Africa and India to the British public. Nevertheless, it were "Haggard's romances, in particular, [that] illustrate a total mentality, a philosophy of life, an idea of humankind completely in harmony with the imperial ideology."⁹⁹ As an imperial defender, the fictional worlds set in exotic backgrounds, the adventures with emphasis on action and the characters – heroes who represented greatness and superiority – he created, left behind an impression of the world where the British were in control.

Allan Quatermain, one of Haggard's greatest and most famous heroes, was the protagonists of many of his adventure novels of which Allan Quatermain (1887) is the most well-known. "Quatermain always exhibits tremendous physical, psychological, and spiritual strength, which sustains him whether he is fighting an enemy, withstanding the torments of hunger, thirst, and pain, or battling with Ayesha."^{100,101} However, in order for most readers to be able to identify with the protagonist, Haggard made him and his companions sufficiently ordinary, "speak[ing] plainly, act[ing] spontaneously, and represent[ing] a type of Englishman and an example of decency."¹⁰² Nevertheless, Katz asserts that in Haggard's novels, female

⁹⁸ Katz, Wendy R. Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987: 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ In 1921, Haggard published the novel She and Allan where he confronted his two most famous characters, Allan Quatermain, the treasure-seeking hero, and Ayesha, the terrifying empress with endless powers and possibilities.

¹⁰¹ Katz, Wendy R. Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987: 33.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 40.

rulers “are more susceptible to indulgent and even lavish fantasies of power than [his] rather wooden and conventional male figures.”¹⁰³

She further explains that character is more important than action, as it is “the central experience in romance and the strongest link between romance and the imperial world. This action, as a rule, is also ‘liberated’ from restraints of such things as family and job.” Allan Quatermain’s wife and son are dead, Ludwig Holly never married, and Leo Vincey, Holly’s adopted son, is left without a biological father at the beginning of She. Katz confirms her claim by stating and applying Hannah Arendt’s remarks on Kipling’s Kim (1901)¹⁰⁴ to Haggard’s romances: “Life itself seems to be left in a fantastically intensified purity, when man has cut himself off from all ordinary social ties, family, regular occupation, a definite goal, ambitions, and the guarded place in the community to which he belongs by birth”.¹⁰⁵

As a consequence of the British defeat in the Second Boer War, Haggard created romances such as Ayesha: The Return of She (1905) and Queen Sheba’s Ring (1910). “At his time the perceived threats of degeneracy from within and invasion from without were intensified, due mainly to military humiliations.”¹⁰⁶ His stories focused much more on military consciousness and preparedness at a crucial time of reorganization of the British Empire’s strategies.

4.2.2. She

Haggard’s masculine quest romance She was written in only six weeks and published in 1887, the same year as the novel Allan Quatermain¹⁰⁷. It is a tale of adventure, a dangerous quest for the secrets of a woman’s love to the darkest Africa. It has two sequels, Ayesha: The Return of She (1905) and Wisdom’s Daughter (1923). The story is narrated by Ludwig Horace Holly, a Cambridge scholar who decides to accompany his adopted son Leo Vincey

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁰⁴ Arendt, Hannah. “The Imperialist Character.” *The Review of Politics*: Vol. 12, No. 3 (Jul., 1950), pp. 303-320.

¹⁰⁵ Katz, Wendy R. Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987: 42.

¹⁰⁶ Katz, Wendy R. Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987: 46.

¹⁰⁷ Haggard, Henry R. She. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995: introduction.

on a quest to follow the path of Leo's ancestors on an African adventure. The setting of the novel is influenced by Henry Haggard's personal experience. As the Master of the High Court of the Transvaal, he was accommodated six years in South-Africa and was fascinated by its culture and landscape. The story opposes traditionally male adventure motives against an erotic, feminist myth, the major character being an immortal incarnation of femininity.

According to Elaine Showalter in Sexual Anarchy, Haggard's novel "show[s] how themes of the male muse, male bonding, and the exclusion of women came together in a complicated response to female literary dominance, as well as to British imperialism and fears of manly decline in the face of female power." At first sight, the story may seem paradoxical as the protagonists are searching for something they intend to destroy. Nevertheless, the powers that haunt them cause them to fall under the spell of female beauty. "*She* is about the flight from women and male dread of women's sexual, creative, and reproductive power."¹⁰⁸

4.2.2.1. Structure and inception

In the unabridged version of She, called The Annotated She preceded by a critical introduction and notes by Norman Etherington, the story's prologue clarifies the structure of the novel. It is a so-called frame narrative introduced by a nameless editor who assures his readers that he ought not to be mistaken with the narrator of the story:

"In giving the world the record of what, looked at as an adventure only, is I suppose one of the most wonderful and mysterious experiences ever undergone by mortal men, I feel it incumbent on me to explain what my exact connection with it is. And so I may as well say at once that I am not the narrator¹⁰⁹ but only the editor of this extraordinary history, and then go on to tell how it found its way into my hands." (3)

This 'editor' claims that a manuscript was sent to him signed by the name L. Horace Holly who asked him to publish his experience. As he reads through this manuscript, the actual story is thus narrated by the Cambridge don named Ludwig Horace Holly, a well-known misogynist as "he was popularly supposed to be as much afraid of a woman as most people are of a mad dog."¹¹⁰ He achieved virgin fatherhood, paternity without the need for contaminating intercourse with women, as a stranger offered him his son:

¹⁰⁸ Showalter, Elaine. Sexual Anarchy. Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle. London: Virago Press, 1992: 83.

¹⁰⁹ Haggard's original manuscript of *She* has "author" according to the author of The Annotated She: 211.

¹¹⁰ Etherington, Norman, ed. The Annotated She: A Critical Edition of H. Rider Haggard's Victorian Romance.

“He is five years old. He cost me his mother’s life, and I have never been able to bear to look upon his face in consequence. Holly, if you will accept the trust, I am going to leave you that boy’s sole guardian.” (8-9)

In order to reinforce Holly’s male reproductive autonomy, he sought the assistance of the male nurse Job, who shares his horror of women, and thus avoided any female attention to the boy, who grew up in an all-male family within the male community of Cambridge.

I would have no woman to lord it over me about the child, and steal his affections from me. The boy was old enough to do without female assistance, so I set to work to hunt up a suitable male attendant. (15)

The only difficulties experienced by Holly were caused by the looks of his son, Leo, “who was the handsomest man in the University, and one of the nicest too” (3):

I had one trouble about him, and that was that every young woman who came across him, or, of not everyone, nearly so, would insist on falling in love with him. Hence arose difficulties which I need not enter into here, though they were troublesome enough at the time. On the whole, he behaved very well; I cannot say more than that. (17)

Holly raised him according to the wishes of his biological father as a student of Greek, the higher Mathematics and *Arabic*.

4.2.2.2. The commencement of the Quest and the acquaintance with the Amahagger tribe

In *Sexual Anarchy*, Elaine Showalter informs her readers about a remarkable detail when she writes that “[i]t is not coincidental that the year when this quest begins, 1881, is also the year when women were first admitted to the Cambridge examinations, and when, symbolically, the strongholds of male knowledge begin to fall.”¹¹¹

As previously mentioned, a characteristic of the genre of imperialistic romance is the representation of the land as a female body to be conquered and the erotic charging of the landscape. The same goes for *She*, where intrepid white man explore and penetrate the dark, untouched continent that includes, “breast-like volcanoes, vaginal chasms, and a treacherous

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991: 4. Hereafter cited as ‘*The Annotated She*’.

¹¹¹ Showalter, Elaine. *Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. London: Virago Press, 1992: 85.

swampy terrain”¹¹² as Tamar Heller puts it in her essay “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality”.

When the protagonists are confronted with a native tribe inhabiting the inner lands, Haggard’s moral relativism and sexual ambiguity come to the surface. Holly, Leo and Job are captured by the Amahagger, “The People of the Rocks” (55). They live in caves within the crater of an extinct volcano. At first sight, their society seemed to be a matriarchal one where the women were, “as a class, exceedingly good-looking, with large, dark eyes, well-cut features, and a thick bush of curling hair – not crisped like a negro’s – and ranging from black to chestnut in hue, with all shades of intermediate colour” (57). When Ustane, one of the women, steps up to Leo and publicly kisses him on the lips¹¹³, his companions feared the worst:

I gave a gasp, expecting to see Leo instantly speared; and Job ejaculated, “The hussy – well, I never!” As for Leo, he looked slightly astonished; and then, remarking that we had clearly got into a country where they followed the customs of the early Christians, deliberately returned the embrace. [...] (57)

The habits and customs of the warlike and cannibalistic Amahagger tribe were so different from what the British men were used to, that it took a while before they came to understand their traditions, which seemed to coincide with the ideas of the New Woman novelists, renouncing their dependencies on men:

It then appeared that, in direct opposition to the habits of almost every other savage race in the world, women among the Amahagger are not only upon terms of perfect equality with the men, but are not held to them by any binding ties. Descent is traced only through the line of the mother, and while individuals are as proud of a long and superior female ancestry as we are of our families in Europe, they never pay attention to, or even acknowledge, any man as their father, even when their male parentage is perfectly well known. (57)

As the story is narrated by Holly, the reader experiences the adventure from his point of view. Consequently, his change of attitude towards women and sexual politics is perceived very clearly. Scorned by women and uncomfortable in their companion, he left Cambridge and pretended to feel indifferent towards – what will turn out to be – the quest for ‘She’. The moment he encounters the Amahagger tribe, who invert the normal rituals of courtship and marriage and lived in a community where polygamy was the norm, he surprisingly wasn’t revolted by them:

¹¹² Heller, Tamar. “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard’s *She*”, Horrorifying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, 2007: 57.

¹¹³ According to the Amahagger custom, Leo is now married to Ustane.

“Taking the hint, we got up and went down to the stream to wash, after which the morning meal was served. At breakfast one of the women, no longer quite young, advanced, and publicly kissed Job. I think it was in its way the most delightful thing (putting its impropriety aside for a moment) that I ever saw.” (61)

Norman Etherington analyses this transition as an endorsing of “the feminist proposition that women should be given more choice in romance and the conventional men’s desire for women who will fulfil his sexual fantasies without prompting.”¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, Haggard could not seem to free himself from patriarchal prejudices as he considered it necessary to add the interjection “putting its impropriety aside for a moment”.

Another token of Haggard’s persistent patriarchal convictions in describing the sexual ethnography of the Amahagger people is a particular scene that could be regarded as a manifestation in line with many British and American literary men who regarded feminism and the New Woman as threatening and lethal to masculinity. Haggard fantasized about killing women in order to save the life of male tradition. As a result, each apparent mark of women’s power is ironically undercut. Billali, the local leader, claims that “[i]n this country the women do what they please. We worship them, and give them their way, because without them the world could not go on; they are the source of life.” However, he confesses that their men only worship women “up to a certain point, till at last they get unbearable, which, they do about every second generation.” When Holly questioned him about their further actions, Billali explained that they “rise, and kill the old ones as an example to the young ones, and show them that [they] are the strongest.” In their first volume of No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century (1988), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar describe it as “a society whose subjugated men periodically rise up in righteous revolution and kill the monstrous regiment of women who rule them.”¹¹⁵ Norman Etherington adds that “[t]he murder of the Amahagger woman who organized the cannibal sacrifice of Mohamed suggests an unconscious fear of women who may eat, i.e., emasculate, men.”¹¹⁶ Holly’s conclusion is that, as a result of this tradition and concomitant practice, these men have found a position of greater freedom and less responsibility.

¹¹⁴ The Annotated She: Critical Introduction, xxx.

¹¹⁵ Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar, eds. No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century. 1 The War of the Words. New Haven: Yale university press, 1988: 23.

¹¹⁶ The Annotated She: Critical Introduction, xxx.

Haggard displays his relativism in discussions of foreign customs and manners when he lets Holly reflect upon his current experiences:

“It is very curious to observe how the customs of mankind on this question vary in different countries, making morality an affair of latitude and religion, and what is right in one place wrong and improper in another.” (58)

According to Peter Keating in The Haunted Study, “[t]hat could still be taken to mean that however much customs may vary the English are right and the Amahaggers are wrong. The conclusion, however, deliberately shuts off this possible escape”¹¹⁷:

“There is, even according to our canons, nothing immoral about the Amahagger custom, seeing that the interchange of the embrace answers to our ceremony of marriage which, as we know, justifies most things.” (58)

Further he claims that “Haggard did genuinely believe in this kind of moral relativism, but the tone and atmosphere of *She*, with its blatant eroticism, violence and white superiority, nullify any serious challenge to the reader’s ingrained assumptions.”¹¹⁸

4.2.2.3. An encounter with the apparently omnipotent She

In the course of their stay with the Amahagger tribe, Holly and Leo learn about the immortal white queen who rules this mysterious African kingdom. They call this matriarchal goddess ‘*She-who-must-be-obeyed*’ who bears the name Ayesha. Sensing that their quest guides them to her, they proceed through a nightmarish landscape, through swamps and deserts until they reach the plain of Kôr with its utopian-like outlook:

“By now we were well on to the great plain, and I was examining with delight the varies beauty of its semi-tropical flowers and trees [...] There were also many palms, some of them more than one hundred feet high, and the largest and most beautiful tree ferns that I ever saw, about which hung clouds of jewelled honeysuckers and great-winged butterflies. [...] So plentiful was the game that at last I could stand it no longer.” (86-7)

Leo and Holly, the story’s delineator, are blindfolded as they penetrate Kôr, as if it were, according to Elaine Showalter in Sexual Anarchy, “a masculine body, through rear cave

¹¹⁷ Keating, Peter. The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875 – 1914. London: Martin, Secker & Warburg, 1989-90 edn.: 165.

¹¹⁸ *Id.*

entrances into the bowels of a great mountain”.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, the feminization of the kingdom prevails as She calls it “the very womb of the Earth, wherein she doth conceive the Life that ye see brought forth in man and beast – ay, in every tree and flower” (142). The opposing characterization of the landscape is an indication of the ambiguity of Haggard’s writing. Ayesha’s discourse is poetic and thus feminized, while for the descriptions of the landscape’s masculinity Haggard applies an analytic and prosaic way of expression.

When they are eventually introduced to this intransigent, immortal, white woman who has been queen of an African tribe for several thousands of years, Holly is overwhelmed by opposing feelings of fear and awe:

“Anyhow, I felt more frightened than ever at this ghost-like apparition, and my hair began to rise upon my head as the feeling crept over me that I was in the presence of something that was not canny. I could, however, clearly distinguish that the swathed mummy-like form before me was that of a tall and lovely woman, instinct with beauty in every part, and also with a snake-like grace which I had never seen anything to equal before.” (96)

Even Holly, who claims not to fear beauty in any way for he has put away his heart from vanities as woman’s loveliness, is seduced by her dazzling beauty when Ayesha unveils herself. Her white kirtle was fastened by a phallic “double-headed snake of solid gold” (105) which, according to Norman Etherington suggests “Satan and evil” (228).

Elaine Showalter writes about the captivation of Holly and Leo when she asserts that “the Englishmen are tormented by dreams of sexual and psychic portent – Holly that he is being buried alive, Leo that he is being split in half. This Holly is buried or engulfed in the female body he has always dreaded, while Leo is split between his sexual loyalties¹²⁰.”¹²¹ The utopian depiction of Ayesha’s beauty, with her “perfect and imperial shaped body” and “serpent-like grace that was more than human” (105), appears to be a manifestation of the feeling that for a man, “there must be something better waiting than an Anglo-Saxon woman”¹²², as Martin Green puts it in Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire.

In describing Ayesha’s demeanour, Haggard appears to convey a contradictory message. She seems to be a powerful, independent woman – challenging values that could

¹¹⁹ Showalter, Elaine. Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle. London: Virago Press, 1992: 86.

¹²⁰ Despite the fact that he is tremendously attracted to Ayesha’s beauty, Leo is married to Ustane and therefore has certain obligations.

¹²¹ Showalter, Elaine. Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle. London: Virago Press, 1992: 86.

¹²² Green, Martin. Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980: 349.

describe her as emasculated. Nevertheless, her “little coquettish movement[s]” (96) and convictions about men’s attitude towards women and vice versa endorse the established sexual stereotypes:

“For man can be bought with woman’s beauty, if it be but beautiful enough; and woman’s beauty can be ever bought with gold, if only there be gold enough. So was it in my day, and so it will be to end of time. The world is a great man, my Holly, where all things are for sale to him who bids the highest in the currency of our desires.” (135)

In the end, Ayesha swears that she will honour and cherish Leo and calls him her husband when she writes their marriage vows “upon the rushing winds which shall bear them up to heaven, and round and continually round this rolling world” (188). According to Etherington, “Haggard responded in the same way many of his contemporaries did to the challenge of “the new woman” who demanded votes, education, and the right to control her own property. Although he was both fascinated and repelled, he did not capitulate.”¹²³

As Wendy R. Katz writes in Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire, “[a] good deal of Ayesha’s attraction is created by her extreme wilfulness – she does whatever she wishes, regardless of the consequences. In point of fact, her Empire is not a model to emulate. She is ruthless to the Amahagger, her subjects, but they are barbarians, after all, and there is some suggestions that she cannot be totally blamed for treating them as she does.”¹²⁴ Ayesha is the embodiment of an imperialist’s fantasy of unlimited power, however, the terrorizing portrayal of this kind of Empire could suggest Haggard’s fear of despotism:

“How thinkest thou that I rule this people? I have but a regiment of guards to do my bidding, therefore it is by force. It is by terror. My empire is of the imagination. Once in a generation mayhap I do as I have done but now, and slay a score by torture.” (118)

Apart from a fear of dictatorship, the narrative displays all the classic symptoms of male anxiety about female power. In her essay “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard’s *She*”, Tamar Heller confirms this when she writes that “[a] number of critics, including Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, have seen

¹²³ The Annotated She: Critical Introduction, xxxi.

¹²⁴ Katz, Wendy R. Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987: 125.

Ayesha as an embodiment of conservative anxieties about the New Woman in the *fin-de-siècle*.”¹²⁵

As mentioned earlier, the more dark races are seen as more threatening because of the association with their skin-colour and primitiveness that indicates a higher level of feminization. Ayesha, being “white as snow” (96), but Arabian by her birth, is even more deceitful as her whiteness, however, “renders her sexuality even more dangerous than is she were unambiguously Other”.¹²⁶ The fact that she is, according to Heller, a racial Other, underscores her emasculating New Womanhood, as women of colour were an image for sexual promiscuity and aggressiveness in the Victorian period. As Heller explains, “the aggressive power of Ayesha’s desire – in which she, rather than the male, is the initiator of sexual conquest – encodes in a larger sense her New Woman-like power to be independent of men.”¹²⁷ Ayesha’s aggressive sexuality poses a threat to masculinity as she has full power and control over the situation and at one point decides to take Ustane’s life and leave Leo completely powerless and emasculated:

For a moment Leo did not quite realise what had happened. But, when he did, his face was awful to see. With a savage oath he rose from beside the corpse, and, turning, literally sprang at Ayesha. But she was watching, and, seeing him come, stretched out her hand again, and he went staggering back towards me, and would have fallen, had I not caught him. Afterwards he told me that he had felt as though he had suddenly received a violent blow in the chest, and, what is more, utterly cowed, as if all the manhood had been taken out of him. (151)

She has the power to completely obliterate Leo’s manliness when she can make him swear undying love for her over the corpse of the faithful Ustane:

“I looked up again, and now her perfect form lay in his arms, and her lips were pressed against his own; and thus, with the corpse of his dead love for an altar, did Leo Vincey plight his troth to her red-handed murderess – plight it for ever and a day.” (153)

Tamar Heller comments that “[t]his abandonment of chivalrous British masculine behaviour plunges Leo into self-disgust.”¹²⁸:

¹²⁵ Heller, Tamar. “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard’s *She*”, *Horrifying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature*. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, 2007: 55.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹²⁸ Heller, Tamar. “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard’s *She*”, *Horrifying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature*. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, 2007: 60.

Leo groaned in shame and misery; for though he was overcome and stricken down, he was not so lost as to be unaware of the depth of the degradation to which he had sunk. On the contrary, his better nature rose up in arms against his fallen self, as [Holly] saw clearly enough later on. (153)

In the chapter ‘Ambiguous Appetites: Sex, Food, and Female Power’ of her essay, Tamar Heller talks about the meaning of Ayesha’s vegetarianism. In nineteenth century England, this way of live reflected a number of ideological perspectives. Heller claims Bulwer-Lytton’s The Coming Race (1871), later reprinted as Vril: The Power of the Coming Race. “In this text, vegetarianism¹²⁹ expresses the novel’s anti-democratic and elitist vision; presumably, those who eschew meat are higher on the evolutionary scale, a characterization that recalls Ayesha’s totalitarian politics and her contempt for the brutish, meat-eating masses.”¹³⁰

Vegetarianism could also be associated with the control of sexual appetite. As a reaction against the chaste sexuality of the domestic woman under male control, Victorian feminists sought to make women independent of male appetite by means of anorexic eating habits. “In this sense, both Ayesha’s desire and her ability to suppress it encode an autonomy that reflects the late nineteenth century climate of changing female roles.”¹³¹

Although she once, too, ate flesh “like a brute beast”, now Ayesha never touches anything except “cakes of flour, fruit and water” (174) and speaks of the Amahagger tribe as “[e]aters of the human flesh” (117)¹³². She exhorts Holly and Leo to adopt this diet as fruit “is the only true food for man” (129). According to Heller, “the rhetoric of anti-carnality she espouses reflects anxieties about the body, or somatophobia, in late nineteenth century feminist discourses.”¹³³

¹²⁹ Their diet was pseudo-vegetarian, milk being their only non-vegetarian indulgence: “Though so temperate, and with total abstinence from other animal food than milk, and from all intoxicating drinks, they are delicate and dainty to an extreme in food and beverage.” – Lytton B. Edward, The Coming Race. London: Routledge, 1967: 61.

¹³⁰ Heller, Tamar. “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard’s *She*”, Horrifying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, 2007: 61.

¹³¹ Heller, Tamar. “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard’s *She*”, Horrifying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, 2007: 56.

¹³² According to Etherington, “the reference here to eating human flesh, described on the previous page as “the ancient and honourable custom of their country,” invites the question of why Ayesha as absolute ruler did not abolish the barbaric custom. It is possible that Haggard deliberately ascribed to her the ruling precepts of his own mentor in the British colonial service, Sir Theophilus Shepstone of South Africa, whose practice of “indirect rule” allowed the continuation of some customs that would not have been tolerated at home in England.” – The Annotated She: 229.

¹³³ Heller, Tamar. “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard’s *She*”, Horrifying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature. North Carolina:

This kind of appetite control she urges on the men, is not only a threat to masculinity, but also to imperial authority, as Heller asserts that “James Gregory points out [that] eating meat, particularly roast beef, “remained powerfully associated with national identity” and Ayesha’s recommendation that British men abandon meat-eating is hence yet another way of diluting their manliness.”¹³⁴ Her imperial plans – invading England with Leo – are, despite her improving intentions, portrayed as being an enormous threat to mankind due to her terrifying and merciless powers:

“In the end she would, I had little doubt, assume absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth, and, though I was sure that she would speedily make ours the most glorious and prosperous empire that the world has ever seen, it would be at the cost of a terrible sacrifice of life.” (170)

Notwithstanding Ayesha’s plans and cruelty, Holly and Leo are not able to resist her charms. This could be an underlying critique, owing to Haggard’s concerns about the decline of British imperial power in the last decades of the nineteenth century which could indirectly be linked to male identity. One night, Holly has a terrible nightmare in which She supervises the hot-potting of the British prime minister. As Heller points out, this way Haggard compares “Ayesha’s imperial plans to the aggressive and murderous female sexuality of the Amahagger, who force red-hot pots on the heads of their enemies in what Gilbert and Gubar describe¹³⁵ as “a vivid enactment of both castration fears and birth anxieties.”¹³⁶ In addition, she ironically observes that male authority is attacked by a cooking-pot, a tool of female domesticity.

4.2.2.4. Ayesha’s death

At the very end of the novel, Ayesha’s beauty perishes in a “thunder wheels of fire” (192) and she ultimately dies after “the men finally persuade Ayesha to practice Christian

McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, 2007: 61.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹³⁵ Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar, eds. No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century. New Haven: Yale university press, 1988: 14.

¹³⁶ Heller, Tamar. “The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard’s *She*”, Horriying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, 2007: 63.

compassion – at which point she loses her immortality and dies”¹³⁷, as Susan Jones asserts in her essay “Into the Twentieth Century: Imperial Romance from Haggard to Buchan”. Her glorious eyes lost their light, her form its perfect shape, her arms were getting thin and angular and her face was growing old until she had the appearance of, as Etherington calls it, “our Darwinian ancestor”¹³⁸ – as an image of devolution:

Smaller she grew, and smaller yet, till she was no larger than a monkey. Now the skin was puckered into a million wrinkles, and on the shapeless face was the stamp of unutterable age. I never saw anything like it; nobody saw anything like the frightful age that was graven on that fearful countenance, no bigger now than that of a two-month’s child, though the skull remained the same size, or nearly so, and let all men pray they never may, if they wish to keep their reason. (194)

With Ayesha’s humiliating death – symbolizing the death of an empowered New Woman – male power can re-establish itself. Moreover, she is consumed by flames before she can pursue her intentions of taking over the British empire. Perhaps this was Haggard’s way to indirectly criticize Queen Victoria and her exaggerated ambitions to extend the overseas possessions of the English Crown.

In Sexual Anarchy, Elaine Showalter defines the death of “this phallic and aggressive mother” as clearing the space for “unbroken male bonding and creativity. Holly and Leo go away together to experience their “joint life” somewhere in Tibet, where no women will find them. Eternal life will not come from the mysteries of the female reproductive cycle, but from masculine intellect and spiritualism.”¹³⁹ It is indeed true that in the sequel to She, Holly and Leo travel the remote corners of Asia, nevertheless, their journey will be determined by a yearning to, once again, behold Ayesha’s enchanting feature. They still nurse hopes as, before she died, she uttered the following words: “I shall come again, and shall once more be beautiful, I swear it – it is true!” (194).

4.2.3. The Return of She

¹³⁷ Jones, Susan. “Into the Twentieth Century: Imperial Romance from Haggard to Buchan”, A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007: 412.

¹³⁸ The Annotated She: Critical Introduction, xviii.

¹³⁹ Showalter, Elaine. Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle. London: Virago Press, 1992: 86.

In Haggard's 1905 sequel Ayesha: The Return of She, Holly and Leo retrace Ayesha's steps as she triumphed over death. Even though, as Tamar Heller claims, "Haggard's sequel re-enacts with particular vividness the plot of men threatened by female sexuality and power in *She*"¹⁴⁰, Ayesha has become nobler and less terrifying. The story is built and narrated exactly like its precedent, initiating with the same editor who received a second manuscript from Holly, after the latter has read the former's edition of his first manuscript with approval and saw "that [he] carried out [his] part of the business well and faithfully."¹⁴¹

The impression that Ayesha left on Leo seems to be of a much greater magnitude than anyone could ever expect, as her death left him with no other desire than joining her in the afterlife by committing "the wickedness of suicide"¹⁴²:

"Does a man stretched in some torture-den commit a crime if he snatches a knife and kills himself, Horace? Perhaps; but surely that sin should find forgiveness – if torn flesh and quivering nerves may plead for mercy. I am such a man, and I will use that knife and take my chance. She is dead, and in death at least I shall be nearer her." (8)

The "happy end" of She – with the annulment of female power and the reinforcement of the masculine upper hand – is now enfeebled due to Holly and Leo's inconsolable despair.

On their way to Central Asia, the men stumble upon a lamasery where they encounter a monk who talks about an incredible sensation he experienced owing to a woman:

"That woman, if woman she were, lit a fire in my heart which will not burn out; oh! And more, more," and Kou-en rocked himself to and fro upon his stool, while tears of contrition trickled from beneath his horn spectacles, "*she made me worship her!* [...]" (17)

Already from the beginning, Ayesha's emasculating powers are resurrected and Holly trembles at the mere thought of her: "Oh! It must be because about this being there was something terrible, something unhuman and appalling" (93).

Contrary to what happened in She¹⁴³, Ayesha spares the life of her opponent with whom she fights for Leo's love. Holly speculates that she "may have grown more gentle" and,

¹⁴⁰ Heller, Tamar. "The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard's *She*", Horriifying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature. North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, 2007: 64.

¹⁴¹ Haggard, R. Henry. Ayesha: The Return of 'She'. New York: Dover Publications, 1978: 2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴³ The killing of Ustane who, according to the Amahagger custom, was his wife.

like their selves, “has learned hard lessons.” Leo adds that at any rate, “she has grown more divine” but worries about what kind of a husband he shall be for that “bright being, if [he] ever get[s] so far” (128). As Leo, described as the handsomest of men, feels that he can never be worthy enough to fulfil the task of being her lover, Ayesha is portrayed as a creature exceeding in greatness and divinity. When he tries to kiss her upon the lips, his face grew white as it drew near her and Holly saw that “this strong man trembled like a reed and seemed as though he were about to fall” (130). There appears to be an inexplicable force that prevents Leo throughout the two novels from having a physical affair with such a creature.

Continuing his ambiguity with regard to sexual relations, in one of the next scenes Haggard highlights Ayesha’s mortal characteristics and modesty when she directs herself towards Leo and “humbled herself at this man’s feet” (136).

Ayesha’s infinite political ambition and ideas had grown, “for she purposed to make Leo the absolute monarch of the world” (150). In vain did he assure her that he desired no such thing, but Ayesha’s ambitions were “such as no imperial-minded madman could conceive” (151). Yet, Holly felt like there was nothing that could stop her – she had triumphed over death, “her beauty and her reckless will would compel the hosts of men to follow her and her piercing intelligence would enable her to invent new weapons with which the most highly trained army could not possibly compete” (151).

However, as her devouring passion for Leo, “inexplicable in its endurance and intensity” (151) has made her mortal and weak, this would prove to be her heel of Achilles:

“When Ayesha was dipped in the waters of Dominion and Deathlessness, this human love left her heart mortal, that through it she might be rendered harmless as a child, who otherwise would have devastated the universe.” (151)

At the end, when Leo, who looked “pale and still” (180), was no longer able to control his physical desire, bent towards her and dropped dead on the spot:

“Look! Leo swayed to and fro as though the stones beneath him were but a rocking boat. To and fro he swayed, stretched out his bland arms to clasp her – then suddenly fell backwards and lay still.” (180)

Determined to spend an eternal life with Leo, she follows him into the hereafter.

The resurrection of Haggard's murderous *femme fatale* seem to have economical, political and military motives. The success of his creation caused him to let Ayesha appear in several other novels. Nevertheless, they could never match the standards of She. The turn of the century was a period when feminism, the conflict with South Africa and the subsequent imperial problems had reached a climax in Victorian England. Both novels remain ambiguous about his political and social convictions, as he intermingles male adventure motives with a feminist myth and while he appears to endorse the female standpoint, he nevertheless cannot free himself from patriarchal prejudices. He constantly alternates between the praise of female power and beauty and the repetition of established feminine values like loyalty and modesty towards men. Further he combines the feeling of fear with the feeling of awe and he stimulates imperialistic action while simultaneously he appears to be criticizing its exaggerated ways. What's more, both novels have the same frame-structure, styling and focalizer. The actual adventure story is preceded by the presumed editor who both times claims that he received a manuscript written by Ludwig Horace Holly. An important difference, however, is the change in Ayesha's attitude, which makes her mortal and the ending of the whole story, eventually fatal for both Leo and Ayesha. The death of both personages can be interpreted as a social compromise.

By means of his specific choice of words, Haggard conveys an opposing message by describing the landscape as both masculine and feminine. A significant literary quality that he applies to convey his ambiguous message against the New Woman writing at the fin-the-siècle, is a clear-cut character depiction. Especially the portrayal of Holly, who, as the focalizer, undergoes a significant transformation in regard to his attitude towards women, and Ayesha, who's characteristics embody male anxieties.

5. Conclusion

The image of the New Woman arose due to a growing sense of feminization in the course of the nineteenth century. Feminist actions tried to challenge the presumed inferiority of women and fought for more rights and autonomy. As the century evolved, several adjustments of the women rights changed the features of the nuclear family as women criticized the institution of marriage, considered an impediment to freedom. Their yearning to alter the social roles, entailed a deconstruction of the hierarchical structures of power of the patriarchy.

Women who wanted to express their ideas in literature, encountered heavily opposition, so consequently pseudonymity became a characteristic of their writings. This served them in two opposing ways: they could freely express their selves given the anonymity, nevertheless this expression was restrained for they had to adopt a mannish style that was not their own. However, it is quite impossible to estimate to what extent the political fight for the female cause had had an impact on female writing and thus the structure of domestic life.

Two genres that can be associated with these female expressions are the new kind of marriage novel and the utopian novel. The former served as a sarcastic remake of the traditional marriage novel, eventually returning to the status quo but with a heavy ironic undertone. The latter was a means to convey their values and convictions through the creation of imaginary worlds in which men's role was severely reduced or neglected.

When we look into Gilman's and von Arnim's lives, we notice that their live and experiences shaped their attitudes and thus the ideas proclaimed in their novels. Gilman's unconventional family situation and despair caused her to abandon her child as she did not consider herself worthy enough to fulfil the task of being a mother. This fact had a significant consequence for the role she gave the mother in her utopian society 'Herland'. As the protagonists in the novel, Gilman deliberately chose three men and they all serve a feminist purpose. One, a sociologist, through whose eyes the reader accepts the superiority of the values of 'Herland', a masochistic character who gets rejected by this perfect society and a more feminized man, adapting easily. Gilman uses humour – and irony – as a means to make her utopian values self-evident in a light-hearted manner.

Von Arnim's experiences with men influenced her image of love and marriage negatively. In her novel The Benefactress, she mocks established conventions regarding the

woman's domestic, wifely role. In the tradition of the changing shape of the marriage novel, she ironically returns to the status quo. Using a female focalizer serves her to easily convey the New Woman's longing for independence, nevertheless her utopian endeavour fails due to ingrained convictions about women's destination. In portraying the conventional man, she uses certain words that serve the sarcastic undertone of her feminist message.

Fearing women's power and the consequent staggering of social stability, men's retort took on different shapes as well. The male romance in the context of imperialism and the reclaiming of utopian literature were a clear-cut reaction against the figure of the New Woman, her writings and ideas. Both sexes appeared to monopolize the utopian genre, nevertheless applying it for different purposes. While for women it was a way to reveal alternative social relations between the sexes, men used it as a means to re-establish and emphasize women's domestic roles or to create a frightening image of the empowering women.

Haggard's political Utopia is also shaped by experiences from his life. As the Master of the High Court of the Transvaal, he lived and travelled a lot in South Africa. Contrary to Gilman, whose landscapes are nurturing, Haggard casts his colonial landscapes as brooding or negligent, monstrous males or man-eating mothers. The ambiguity of his novels continues on various levels. Both She and Ayesha are built upon traditionally male adventure motives intermingled with a feminist myth. Although at times he seems to endorse the feminist standpoint, he could not free the discourse of his writing from patriarchal prejudices. He combines his ambiguity with regard to sexual relations with an ambiguous attitude towards imperialistic actions. Besides his choice of words, one of the most important literary qualities that serve his purpose is character depiction – and evolution. Holly's change in attitude towards women and Ayesha who ultimately behaves like any other maiden seem to implicate a social compromise.

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