

Gender/Mutiny in Edwardian Fiction: Charles Pearce's Fiction of 1857

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Abstract:

This article examines how political events in the far-flung spaces of the British Empire affected gender relations in Britain in the Edwardian period. It offers a reading of an alternate corpus of works which tracks masculine anxieties over changing gender relations that led to suffrage for women and shows the closely knit relationship between gender and race in early twentieth century in Britain.

1 Analysis of fin-de-siècle or early 20th century gender representations in Britain is often done with reference to first-wave feminism and the suffrage movement that culminated in the achievement of the vote for women in 1928. This history shows the fraught and prolonged struggle to transform gender relations and gain personal and group rights and universal suffrage, which was marked not just by gender prejudices but also those of class. But what if we explore this topic of the representation of Edwardian women and their gender relations through an alternative lens? What if we explore it through the theme of Empire to see the connections between the representation of women in Britain and political events that took place in distant climes and far-off places? What sort of new meanings would emerge in this alternative view? Such an analysis would be valid because Britain's empire had caused a skew in gender demographics since the Victorian period as its men left in large numbers to govern the ever-expanding British Empire. Indeed, in the decades leading to the Edwardian period, a shift in gender relations had become imminent. Joanna Trollope points out that by the mid-1800s over 35% of women of reproductive age—those between 20 and 44 years of age—were single (23). The 1871 census showed that there was a surplus of 718,566 women in Britain. This surplus of women was matched by the large numbers of British men stationed all over the colonies, in the army, civil service and civilian life. Furthermore, Britain needed more and more young men to fuel its armies in its dizzying acquisition of empire, especially in the period of high imperialism. Imperial rule internationally had profound influence on domestic matters, especially within the context of gender.

2 In this paper, we will focus on one such iconic moment that shook Britain's imperial rule in mid-nineteenth century – the Sepoy mutiny of 1857 – that changed the course of imperialism, redefined masculinity and affected Anglo-Indian women's lives and that reverberates to the present. Indeed, no fewer than five academic books were written about this event between 2002 and 2007, the 150th anniversary of the mutiny. We will specifically

discuss the relationship between the Sepoy mutiny and gender relations in Britain by examining three novels written by Charles Pearce in the Edwardian period. We want to focus on Pearce's mutiny triptych published between 1909 and 1912 because his status as a British writer (who had never been to India) rather than an Anglo-Indian one, raises interesting issues about the *metaphoric* function played by the Indian Mutiny in the British imaginary¹ at the end of the period of high imperialism. Pearce's triptych also provides an opportunity to comment on the significance of aspects of memory and nostalgia in the construction of gender, as each of his novels deals differently with the recuperation of the past. The origin for this paper lay in the question: Why would a powerful and dominant Britain, seemingly in firm control of a vast Empire, continue to look back to the Mutiny which was perhaps the single-most destabilising moment in its imperial history especially during a period of relative political stability in the Edwardian period? In addition to empire reshaping gender relations, it also reshaped fiction. Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall in *Studies in Literature and History*, published in 1915, points out that the presence of empire had a deep influence in the shaping of fiction from the 1880s through the first decade of the twentieth century in that there was a convergence of the novel of manners with the adventure novel to produce a new form of action novel that did not dwell on the fantastic but rather "on genuine materials ... and a stricter canon of probabilities" (7). Thus the Mutiny, Edwardian gender relations and Edwardian fiction are in a relationship with each other, which we wish to unpack and reveal through our analysis of Charles Pearce's triptych.

3 The Mutiny began on 10 May 1857 in the garrison town of Meerut. It was a violent, and in some ways, inevitable response to divisions between the colonizing British and colonized Indians that dated back years, and included the effects of evangelical Protestantism, and Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse, which in 1856 led to the annexation of Oudh (Awadh). When the uprising was finally put down in 1858, three sites had been permanently engraved on the British imagination: Lucknow, Cawnpore (Kanpur), and Delhi.

4 In Lucknow the besieged Residency held out for five months before it was liberated by troops under the command of Sir Colin Campbell on 17 November 1857. This epic tale of survival amidst crumbling buildings, of men, women, and children suffering the ravages of starvation and disease as well as regular onslaughts from the sepoys who vastly outnumbered them, was considered a high-point of British heroism during the Mutiny. Lucknow also re-encoded masculinity within a militaristic framework – to be physical, athletic, enduring,

¹ We use the term in a psychoanalytic sense, referring to an internalized, idealized image of oneself.

reliant and homosocial was now important to running an empire. The terrible events that unfolded in Cawnpore are the most extreme example of Indian violence during the course of the Mutiny (extremes of British violence within (British) Mutiny history are frequently elided) and, alongside the heroism of Lucknow, stand out above all others in the British imagination of the Mutiny. After surrendering to Nana Sahib in return for safe passage to Allahabad, the remnants of the European garrison were attacked and over 210 women and children were imprisoned and later hacked to death, their bodies being thrown down a nearby well. In both iconic sites, the cultural and racial memory is that of the white woman under threat of rape and murder. This image of Cawnpore became the enduring symbol of the fragility and vulnerability of the British woman in the empire, an image that was in continuum with the 19th century British image of the woman as the Angel in the House². The third iconic site of the Mutiny in the British imagination is Delhi, where its storming and recapture in September 1857, after a long siege, was a major victory for the British, and the turning point of the Mutiny, although its memory has not been engraved as deeply on the British imagination as have Lucknow and Cawnpore: Lucknow was the symbol of British fortitude and a re-imagination of its masculinity that stood against the horror of Cawnpore that soon began to emblemize vulnerable Anglo-Indian³ femininity. The Mutiny—and Mutiny fiction, too—is implicated in the reconfiguring of the masculine militaristic hero and the concomitant reconfiguring of white femininity. Within the gender relations of mid-Victorian Britain and its empire, particularly India, the white woman functioned to give the masculine hero his identity. If he was the militaristic hero, she was the domestic goddess who had to be protected. The white woman came to represent not only womanhood, but the family and home, the white, domestic, threatened spaces that had to be protected at all costs from contamination by, in the case of Mutiny fiction, India. Consequently, the construction of the racial other (Indian mutineers in the case of Mutiny fiction) is inextricably linked to the construction of the white male hero and white womanhood.

² Coventry Patmore's long poem *The Angel in the House* (1854-1862) made this figure popular. Here Patmore referred to the woman of the house who was self-sacrificing and angelic – the perfect woman.

³ We distinguish between British and Anglo-Indian identities as the latter were a hybridized group. Though of British origin, many Anglo-Indians had lived and worked in India for several generations. In *Sahibs, Nabobs and Boxwallahs: A Dictionary of the Words of Anglo-India* Ivor Lewis outlines the shifting meaning of the term Anglo-Indian: 'It first denoted a person of "pure" British descent resident or born in India, but in 1911 the Government of India decided to substitute this term for "Eurasian" as the official one for persons of mixed descent.' He adds that: 'It also refers to anything composed of English and Indian elements, to terms adopted by English from Indian languages, and to literature about India written by British authors in English.' His definition is entirely in accord with the entry in the OED: **A.** *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of India under British rule, or the English in India. **B.** *n.* **a.** A person of British birth resident, or once resident, in India. **b.** A Eurasian of India.

5 The 1857 Mutiny can usefully be described as a “critical event” in British imperial history, to borrow Veena Das’s term, that transformed definitions of space and people’s lives in completely new and unexpected ways; it instituted “a new modality of historical action” and new forms of categorization of race, of markets, and of imperial advances which were not “inscribed in the inventory of that situation” (5). For instance, the Mutiny transferred the governance of India from the hands of the East India Company to the Crown, consequently re-inscribing Indians who had been citizens of specific regions of the subcontinent as British subjects; the Anglo-Indians in their turn were transformed from being members of the East India Company army, the civil service, and the like, to becoming part of the machinery of the British Empire, their white bodies markers of their physical might and power over native lives. The Mutiny in Cawnpore, in particular, also resituated British women and children as being completely vulnerable to and threatened by Indian men. As Jenny Sharpe states in her classic work, *Allegories of Empire*, “A representation of [Anglo-Indian] women as the innocent victims of colonial rebellion was instrumental in reestablishing existing structures of colonial authority and in preparing the grounds for new ones” (65). In this critical event, these women were transformed from being wives and mothers to becoming the object of the particular concern of the Empire and the Army. Their sexuality and their vulnerability were articulated not within the private sphere but were rather legislated from within public discourse. For instance, this resituation of Anglo-Indian women is evidenced in the Ilbert Bill controversy of 1883, which gave native officials in the colonial administrative service the authority to try Anglo-Indian subjects living in country towns. The agitation against the Bill reinforced two opposing representations of Indian men: as effeminate and as cruel and therefore inappropriate to try Anglo-Indian women in Court. This Bill was later amended in 1884 so that the separate status and nature of the Anglo-Indians was preserved. Further, and more importantly, the rationality of the judicial system and that of the family, within which the woman was traditionally located, intersected to reveal how the Anglo-Indian woman was reconfigured: she had become the responsibility of the judiciary which defined her legal status and protected her modesty from the reaches of native men.

6 Such was the impact of the Mutiny on the British imaginary that it became the subject of numerous works of fiction, drama, and memoir, and depicted in countless paintings, cartoons, and popular posters where it was often represented through images of the British lion subduing the Indian tiger. Indeed, as Hilda Gregg observes in a survey of Indian Mutiny fiction published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1897, “[o]f all the great events of this century, as they are reflected in fiction, the Indian Mutiny has taken the firmest hold on

the popular imagination” (218). The genre reached its apogee—in terms of both popularity and output—in the late-Victorian period. Nineteen Mutiny novels were published in the 1890s, while only eight were published in the first decade of the new century and only six in the decade that followed. The majority of these heady—and frequently formulaic—adventure fictions feature the white male soldier hero defending threatened white British womanhood as their central narrative trope.

7 A decade after this zenith for the Mutiny novel, Charles E. Pearce, a newspaper editor and prolific author of popular biographies, published a triptych of novels set in each of the three iconic sites in the British memory of the Mutiny: *Love Besieged: A Romance of Lucknow* (1909); *Red Revenge: A Romance of Cawnpore* (1911); and *Star of the East: A Romance of Delhi* (1912). But why, at the end of the Edwardian period (1901-1910), towards the end of the age of high imperialism (1875-1914) did Pearce choose to revive a genre so emphatically associated with the late Victorian period? What events in Edwardian Britain are reflected in his fictions? Are his novels valuable as indices of Edwardian popular consciousness?

8 In his Preface to *Love Besieged* Pearce highlights the continued lack of understanding between the British and Indian communities in India more than half a century after the Mutiny and implies that contemporary events in Anglo-India – the 1905 Bengal partition and 1907 unrest in the Punjab – were making India into a flash point again. Within the context of imperial memory and imperial history, the Punjabi unrest of 1907 represented a citation of the 1857 Mutiny, and prompted Charles Pearce to exhort his readers “never [to] forget the fixed, immutable characteristics of the Indian race. It is well, therefore, that the memory of the past should not be allowed to die out” (*Love Besieged*, 3). It was for this didactic purpose that he penned *Love Besieged* and the succeeding two panels of his Mutiny triptych.

9 Contemporary reviewers praised both *Love Besieged* and *Red Revenge* for their historical veracity. The reviewer for the *Scotsman*, for example, claims “It is clear that [Pearce] has studied the period with more than ordinary industry,” and praises Pearce’s “lifelike” hero and heroine (3). But what does lifelike mean in the context of a Mutiny novel set in the late Edwardian period? Both *Love Besieged* and *Red Revenge* are marked by idealised, white Anglo-Indian masculinity typical of the majority of Mutiny novels, and passive white women lacking agency. By focusing on gender relations, initially in the first two panels of Pearce’s Mutiny set, we will show how they operate as a metaphor for the roles of men and women in the larger political and social arenas of the Edwardian period, in Anglo-India, and in Britain itself.

10 In this next section, we will give brief descriptions of each one of the three novels before we discuss the function of history, memory, and nostalgia and their implications for gender constructions in the triptych.

11 *Love Besieged* is the story of Jean Atherton who joins her magistrate father in Lucknow just as the Mutiny flares. She is evacuated to the Residency where she is thrown into the company of two very different men, Dr Lennard and Jack Hawke, as well as the Eurasian woman, Mrs Ross. Lennard and Hawke function as binary opposites; both are romantically interested in Jean, but while one is open and uncomplicated, the other is moody, socially ostracized, and with a less than honourable past. Dr Lennard is an old-fashioned, gentlemanly hero. Jack Hawke, on the other hand is a manly hero, the officer who bravely leads the military action in the novel, whose shortcomings (his drinking and womanising) highlight the danger of degeneration in Anglo-India. Jean Atherton clearly functions as the white virginal heroine, fresh from home, who gives the soldiers a reason to fight, and who must be protected at all costs. Edith Ross, a Eurasian woman, is represented as racially degenerate and thus always a threat to the purity and safety of the domestic hearth and Victorian gender constructions that valorized the figure of the Angel in the House. Lennard dies, hit by a bullet meant for Jean, and Jack Hawke, whose bravery is instrumental in saving the besieged Anglo-Indians, wins her. Mrs Ross is exposed as a treacherous villain, which is conveniently explained away by her mixed blood.

12 The second panel of Pearce's triptych set in Cawnpore, focuses on Dick Heron, a fresh young soldier, who believes himself in love with Ruth Armitage, but is also in danger of falling into bad ways through his contact with the natives. The Mutiny comes just soon enough to prevent his fall. As in *Love Besieged* there are two principal rivals for the heroine's affections, in this case both uncomplicated masculine heroes: Dick Heron and his brother Phil. The latter is a Crimean war veteran who has been recovering from the injuries he sustained at Balaclava who comes out to India to join the relieving forces, principally to rescue Dick as well as Ruth in whom he is romantically interested. Dick dies heroically, while Phil Heron arrives in Cawnpore in time to save Ruth from being murdered by the evil Hoosainee Khanum, the servant of Nana Sahib's favourite dancing girl. The narrative toys with the constructions of white masculinity and femininity, but the disruption to established gender roles—like the disruption to the empire—is only temporary, and with the relief of Cawnpore and the arrival of Philip Heron, who rescues Ruth, order is restored to the narrative, gender, and the empire.

13 Pearce's final novel in his triptych, *A Star of the East*, focuses on Delhi, which was by far the least traumatic of all the three sites of Mutiny in the British imaginary. This slim novel, which at first appears to repeat the familiar formula of the earlier two – a masculine protagonist who puts duty before romance and loyalty to comrades above the unreasonable demands of a woman, a youthful heroine, an evil Indian woman, and inept Indian men – is intriguing for its brief narrative development. Guy Horsford, a soldier, is romantically interested in Clare Stanford. Whilst watching a nautch (a dance performed by women), he discovers that the young nautch dancer is his dear friend Jack Folliot's Eurasian pre-teenage daughter, Nara. As Jack died saving his life, Guy feels compelled to save Nara, despite Clare's opposition. After rescuing Nara, he arranges for her to be placed in the care of her aunts in England, who send her to boarding school. Meanwhile, Clare marries Andrew Meldrum, one of the richest men in India, and Guy is ordered to Burma. Five years later Nara, now an attractive young woman, leaves school and, wishing to return to India, takes a post with Clare Meldrum who, estranged from her husband, is about to embark for the subcontinent after an extended stay in Europe. Clare and Nara, who meet Guy in Calcutta, both desire him. In the final scenes, as Delhi is set on fire by the mutineers, Guy and Nara die while trying to escape together and Clare becomes the mistress of a Frenchman. The focus of this narrative is not the Mutiny but rather Guy's relationship with the two women, and, indeed, the novel concludes as the Mutiny in Delhi commences.

14 The uneasy fit of *A Star of the East* within Mutiny fiction is evident in its brevity, its foreclosed romance, its ambivalent representations of race, its representation of something approaching paedophilia or incestuous desire, and its conclusion, where the male protagonist, far from surviving the Mutiny, perishes at its outset. All of these factors signal a different positioning of the reader. Mutiny fiction inaugurated the Anglo-Indian Station romance and both share the same premise – that romance can develop only in the face of extreme adversity. Indrani Sen points out that the notion of extreme adversity is not limited to Mutiny fiction, but extends to all Anglo-Indian or Station romance in which India is presented as a "danger-ridden" zone for British women who venture there (75). For Sen, the basic ingredients of Anglo-Indian Station romances consist of "the arrival of the fresh-faced heroine from England, her temporary 'disorderly' behaviour, resulting from the friendship of the local married flirt, and finally coming to her senses and marrying the manly hero" (75). Whilst Pearce partakes of the basic structure of these romances, he changes reader expectations of the figure of the heroine in *A Star of the East*.

15 The narrative signals its ambivalence towards Anglo-Indian society in two different ways. First, the text signals its ambivalence by positing Clare and Nara as binary opposites. For instance, the differences between Clare and Nara are drawn in the ways they address Guy. Clare demands in a note, “I want you. Come”; Nara, in turn, pleads, “I only want you, Sahib” (64). This is echoed later when Clare is presented as defiant where Nara is gentle (124). Notwithstanding the fact that Clare is Guy’s social equal as well as, initially, the object of his desire, and Nara is very young and effectively his ward early in the novel, it is through these insistent comparisons that the reader begins to perceive Nara as a rival for Guy’s affections. Thus the narrative seems to be unable to identify a singular heroine. Despite the structure of triangulated desire, there is no happy ending. And though the novel emulates the injunctions of a Mutiny romance—the virginal woman who marries the manly hero-- it also violates them by having Guy and Nara killed quite unexpectedly in the conclusion.

16 Secondly, the ambivalence is signaled by the final coupling of Guy and Nara that proves to be problematic for the reader as Nara “could hardly have been more than eleven” (10) at the outset of the narrative in 1852. At the conclusion of the narrative she is sixteen, still in her mid-teens. Nevertheless, the narrative sexualizes her throughout: “Her childish beauty was strangely fascinating” (10). Nara’s training as a nautch dancer and the early descriptions of her can be explained within the context of the early sexual maturing of Indians that was often perceived as a sign of their degeneration. Yet the narrative clearly also seems to suggest that the Anglo-Indian men enjoying the nautch at which Nara first makes an appearance are equally sexually depraved. The alignment of the fascinated reader with the men witnessing the nautch not only makes both experience Nara’s body voyeuristically, but also seems to normalize the conclusion where the narrative voice describes Nara and Guy’s love for each other as being something other than how “love is understood in this world. It was something purer—something higher” (151). In fact, it is the excessive sexualizing of Nara throughout the narrative that makes the reader unsurprised that she could be a potential mate for Guy Horsford, even though he is also a parental figure to her. The trajectory of sexual desire is intensely problematic in this text as desire is represented as perverse – Indian women as nautch dancers and temptresses, all men as being sexually deviant with paedophilic or incestuous desires, and Anglo-Indian women as differently perverse, loving one person but marrying another, having affairs, and living apart from their husbands. Indeed, all is not well in Anglo-India in this novel, and consequently intimacy and desire take perverse turns. The only happy relationship in the novel appears to be that of Nara’s dead parents – Jack Folliott and the unnamed “Mohammedan girl.” But this happy relationship is

limited by the facts that Folliott neither marries her nor tells his family in Britain about her or their daughter, leaving Guy, his best friend, to inform them when he rescues Nara.

17 While Station romances and Mutiny fiction normally frown on cross-racial relationships, this narrative's ambivalent stance normalizes Jack Folliott's and Guy Horsford's relationships, and leads us to the surprising conclusion that happy relationships ought to be cross-racial. Similarly, the novel's treatment of Anglo-Indian women—Clare as capricious, marrying not for love but for money, separating from her husband and wanting to have an affair with Guy – turns the traditional expectations of the Mutiny novel – that all natives are bad, all Anglo-Indian men sexually beyond reproach, and all Anglo-Indian women long-suffering – on their head.

18 In the classic work *Nationalism and Sexuality*, George Mosse shows the close connection between the ideas of nationalism and respectability and suggests that both these terms “assigned everyone his [sic] place in life, man and woman, normal and abnormal, native and foreigner; any confusion between these categories, threatened chaos and loss of control” (16). In Mosse's work, for nationalism to function, it is manliness that becomes the lynchpin, that maintains order over the chaos that would otherwise ensue within the nation because it symbolised “the nation's spirit and material vitality” (23). Mosse suggests that the roles of the sexes had to be clearly differentiated and any form of sexual perversion could be eschewed only through the strict maintenance of manliness.

19 While Mosse's work is specific to German nationalism, it is also pertinent to Pearce's work which was a product of high imperialism. *A Star of the East* radically rewrites masculinity and femininity in that it represents Clare as a reproachful character who does not subscribe to any of the ideals of Anglo-Indian femininity, and Guy as a hero who is not particularly successful in his heroism. His problematic “heroism” can be seen in his unsuccessful attempts to spy on the Indians: on the two occasions he disguises himself, he also betrays himself by speaking in English. Ironically, it is Nara who gives him the information on the impending Mutiny that she overhears when she is “disguised” in European clothing. Again, late in the novel, when he is imprisoned in Delhi, it is Nara who manages to rescue him. Ideal Anglo-Indian masculinity and femininity as commonly drawn in Anglo-Indian fiction (in both the Mutiny romance and the Station romance) are attenuated and called into question in this text.

20 It is this subversion of the Mutiny novel – a purportedly historical novel that contains hardly any historical details of the events of the Mutiny in Delhi, and that re-genders the protagonists from idealized types to ones that are ordinary – that lends complexity to *A Star*

of the East and raises questions about the representations of women that are also asked in *Love Besieged* and *Red Revenge*. Reading the triptych together provides an alternative narrative of Pearce's novels to the one in which they are generally perceived as an anachronistic evocation of the Mutiny. One could say that Pearce's triptych contains the strains and stresses of shifting gender roles that became prevalent from the 1880s onwards in Britain. This shift is most obvious in *A Star of the East* where Guy's "masculinity" is questioned and is depleted in its power. In contrast, Clare's sexually transgressive femininity goes against the grain of the Angel in the House companionable love that the heroines in *Love Besieged* and *Red Revenge* offer to their suitors. Such a reading is particularly valid, especially in the representation of the Eurasian Nara who, notwithstanding her racial contamination, is the only virtuous person left in the text. Such a depiction of the Eurasian is in stark contrast to that of Mrs Ross in *Love Besieged*, who is perceived as sexually transgressive because she is Eurasian (which also explains her murderous tendencies). In contrast, *A Star of the East* critiques Anglo-Indian women as well as upper-class women in Britain who are unable to love or be kind to family members.

21 The question remains as to why, in this triptych of historical novels on the 1857 Indian Mutiny, Pearce chooses to introduce Anglo-India's triumphant site only in order to foreclose the battles that led to triumph? If the final novel in the triptych is linked to a site of British victory, why does it also have an ambivalent message about its protagonists – a hero who has an unhealthy desire, an Anglo-Indian heroine who is an adulterer, and a biracial child-woman who exhibits the desirable qualities that the purely white Anglo-Indian protagonists lack? To address those questions we want to shift direction to explore the meanings and relationships of memory and history and the part that they play in readings of the Mutiny. Such an approach is apposite considering that Pearce's triptych consists of three historical panels. We will begin by unpicking briefly the tight relationship between memory and nostalgia, as together they function to remember the past in various ways, not unlike Pearce's attempts to memorialize the 1857 Mutiny. It is this unpicking of this relationship between memory and nostalgia that will lead us to the triptych's commentary on Edwardian gender relations.

22 As a discipline, the writing of history in the early period was perceived as a nationalist project which led to a specific codification of historical knowledge in the nineteenth century. With the establishment of history as a bounded discipline, it became the institutional guarantee of all collective memory. Within this context, the role of memory, once perceived as the very source of history, diminished as historiography as a body of knowledge grew. But

the practice of *cultural* history and the recuperation of *cultural* memory in the 1960s, the importance of social memory (as different from nationalist history) came to the fore. This new methodology led to a more fluid understanding of the past, as memories recuperated in the present tended to be fluid. Furthermore, cultural history and memory also came to be perceived as radical in its recuperation of lost, “unimportant,” or underprivileged voices that challenged dominant understandings of nationalist history. Thus, cultural history and memory narratives revealed the structures of forgetting within dominant history.

23 If history as perceived in the early phase of its nationalist project was purportedly based on “verifiable” facts that can be found in the archives, nostalgia, in contrast, is based on a particular rendition of loss which is more in alignment with the writer’s present than with the historical past. Thus nostalgia has an inbuilt amnesia as it forecloses the dull, the grey, and the mundane in order to create the past as a retroactive construct from the present. In its turn, notwithstanding its supposed veracity, there is an implicit selective amnesia imputed to history as well in that it is constituted by what Shoshana Felman suggests is “a double silence” of both the oppressed who are traditionally voiceless, and that of official history which is silent to the tradition of the oppressed (213). Thus both history and nostalgia work through silences and omissions. Yet while history strives to represent and critique the past, nostalgia evokes a certain version of it to relive that past. Susan Stewart argues in *On Longing* that: “The past is constructed from a set of presently existing pieces. There is no continuous identity between these objects and their referents. Only the act of memory constitutes their resemblance” (145).

24 In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym suggests that nostalgia is “a symptom of our age, a historical emotion” and that outbreaks of it often followed revolutions. The outbreaks also point to the “unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that become obsolete” (xvi). Boym categorises two forms of nostalgia, restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia is often at the core of religious and national revivals and focuses on a return to national symbols and myths. It emphasized a return to origins and a conspiracy theory which is a reflection of what Boym calls a “pre-modern conception of good and evil” (43). Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, often negotiated between the unitary national history and collective memory. Notwithstanding its expression of a longing for home, the emphasis on collective memory caused the narrative of reflective nostalgia to be “ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary” (50).

25 We suggest that anxieties in fin-de-siècle Britain, the anxieties over shifting social relations, such as the refusal of women to be properly feminine, are displaced on to

sexualized, racialized, and mutinous Indian bodies in order to evoke a past which was less ambiguous and more orderly. The gender relations at the end of *Love Besieged* and *Red Revenge* show the restoration of an imperial patriarchal order out of step with the Edwardian period in which Pearce wrote. The unsafe home Pearce depicts in his Mutiny triptych is also metonymically linked to the unfamiliar home that Britain had become by the time he came to write his novels.

26 In the corpus of Mutiny novels, it is Flora Annie Steele's *On the Face of the Waters* that comes closest to a representation of a reflective nostalgia. Its interrogation of masculinity, representations of racial divide, and its irony make it a complex novel. Pearce's triptych, on the other hand, contains a restorative nostalgia that becomes visible in the final novel, *A Star of the East*, which is replete with foreclosures. Nostalgia, or the longing for home, is also premised upon a great sense of insecurity. Notwithstanding the rumbles for independence in India, Britain in the early years of the twentieth century had undergone huge social changes and the Mutiny functions as a palimpsest for those changes. Our analysis of the focus on the woman's body in Pearce's triptych emphasises the feminist understanding that the body is the site of taxonomical reflection, suggesting hierarchies, anxieties, fantasies, and categories. 1857 functions as a marker of the threat to (white) male patriarchal authority domestically as well as in the colonies. This year not only saw British masculinity threatened by the Mutiny, but also the passage of the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act that for the first time gave women a limited right to divorce their husbands (if they could prove adultery plus violence, incest, or bigamy). The decades that followed the Mutiny saw further erosions to patriarchal authority in the home: in 1873, the Custody of Infants Act gave women the right of access to their children after a separation or divorce; the 1884 Married Women's Property Act gave women the right to retain property bought with her money or brought into the marriage; and the 1890 Matrimonial Causes Act gave her further rights to divorce her husband. It is a commonplace to cite that it is imperial rule in general that influenced discourses around gender and sexuality in late Victorian Britain. As Antoinette Burton suggests, "[T]he beginnings of the organized British women's movement at mid-century coincided with the apogee of British imperial preeminence" (2). British women's rights kept apace with the expansion of the empire, and the women's movement in Britain achieved many concessions: higher education, marriage law reform, and municipal suffrage. Indeed, it was the presence of empire and its productions of racial hierarchies that led to women's rights because, as the argument went, British women were hierarchically superior to colonised men. The British woman's body became "a dense transfer point for relationships of

power,”⁴ and a number of feminists have gestured at the close intertwining of the discourses of women in Britain and the racial Other under imperialism⁵. Indeed, the value of British women became visible only when they were at their most vulnerable as in the Mutiny at Cawnpore. In short, white femininity could come into visibility only in its relationship to its racial Other.

27 The British woman’s body as somatic territory that reveals distinctions between normal and deviant became evident in the post-Mutiny period through the emergence of the figure of the New Woman. This figure was celebrated in the closing years of the nineteenth century, particularly the 1880s and 1890s, and became metonymically linked with the very notion of modernity at the turn of the century. Angelique Richardson points out that over a hundred novels and even more short stories were written by or contained the figure of the New Woman in the final years of the nineteenth century (1-32). Additionally, Ann Ardis argues that the New Woman replaced the figure of the Angel in the House that became popular in the mid-nineteenth century (qtd in Richardson 7). Thus the figure of the New Woman is associated with modernism, with the challenge to traditional comprehensions of patriarchal authority, masculinity and femininity, and with disruption and subversion. The New Woman interrogated marriage and heterosexuality, supported socialism, and was perceived as being simultaneously asexual and mannish as well as hypersexual and emphasising the importance of physical passion. Ultimately, the figure of the New Woman constituted a heterogenous group, espousing new attitudes to femininity, marriage, and sexuality while also simultaneously endorsing the attitudes of the eugenicists for whom the maternal figure was central to the production of healthy citizens (and, consequently, for the very maintenance of empire).

28 So how does the role of the New Woman influence the representation of women (and men) in Pearce’s Edwardian Mutiny triptych? Of what relevance would this modern figure be in novels that represent an event that took place over fifty years earlier? Novelists who used the figure of the New Woman frequently did so to interrogate the conventions of marriage, as in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), and in Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* (1895). Novels that incorporated the New Woman focused on marital breakdown, adultery, sexuality before marriage, and single-motherhood, destroying the foundations of idealized Victorian womanhood (see Cunningham 16-18). We

⁴ We are, of course, misusing Foucault here, for whom it is sexuality that is the dense transfer point for relationships of power. See *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*.

⁵ See Burton, *Burdens of History*, Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*, and Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire*.

suggest that this triptych engaged with this figure by intertwining racialized representations that bespeak an anxiety over the threats to conventional and patriarchal masculinity that *both* the Mutiny and the New Woman signified.

29 It is undoubtedly the case that the expanding role of women in the public arena in the 1890s and beyond was reflected in imperial fiction, notably in the work of Bessie Marchant in a general colonial sense, and more particularly, in an Indian sense, in the work of Anglo-Indian women writers such as Flora Annie Steel, Maud Diver, and others whose heroines were brave and adventurous beyond the fortitude and pluck that had always been expected of white women in colonial settings. Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters*, for example, features a strong, even masculinized heroine in Kate Erlton, who on several occasions saves, rather than is saved by, the hero Jim Douglas. In *New Woman and Colonial Adventure Fiction in Victorian Britain*, LeeAnne M. Richardson attempts to show the links between masculine adventure fiction and New Woman fiction as both became popular at the same moment in English literary tradition. She suggests that juxtaposing the two subgenres "illuminates the development and interdependence of gender politics and imperialism in late-Victorian Britain" (2). She also examines the appropriation of the New Woman figure by male writers who wrote colonial adventure fiction and suggests that such strategies had a double function, as a response to market considerations as well as to neutralize the threat of the New Woman writer. New Woman fiction, in which the heroines usurped masculine spaces, was political in that it questioned patriarchal ideology. When writers of colonial adventure fiction represented such women, Richardson claims it was "to conquer her savage nature ... [to make her] consent to domesticity and bear a child" (76).

30 While both *Love Besieged* and *Red Revenge* can be read in this light, *A Star of the East* seems to have no such subversive move. It is a novel that simultaneously encapsulates the masculine anxieties of the erosion of privileges while also accepting it. Charles Pearce's three Mutiny novels provide ideal examples for exploring the way the expanding role of women, both in the Anglo-Indian context and at home in Britain, is reflected in Mutiny fiction, which, as Christopher Herbert explains, had by the end of the nineteenth century "proliferated to the point of becoming a major subcategory of the British novel" (273).

31 In short, 1857 confirmed the triumph of imperialism in the British imaginary. The Mutiny in Pearce's triptych functions as a metaphor that expressed early-twentieth-century gender relations by evoking the outrages committed by Indians on British women's bodies. The focus on the Anglo-Indian women's vulnerabilities functions as a contrast to Pearce's present where women not only did not need the same protection from men, but rather where

social relations between men and women had resulted in the attenuation of British masculinity. The references in the triptych to the dead white male body fallen in the Mutiny, are relevant to Pearce's Edwardian present. The evoking of the mutinous racial other has to be read in its metonymic relationship to the sexual other of the masculine national imaginary in Britain. The new beginning promised at the end of each of Pearce's novels is also a desire to wipe out the troubled present. Pearce's citing of the Mutiny is a nostalgic longing for a lost place at a lost time; it is a nostalgia that has its origin in millenarianism as well as an Anglo-Indian desire for a home that is not desirable any more. The nostalgia to restore the lost origins of post-mutiny patriarchal order goes hand-in-hand with the realization that the past is indeed a distant country.

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