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The Visual Exchange: The Intersection of Vision, Gender, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century British Literature

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**THE VISUAL EXCHANGE: THE INTERSECTION OF
VISION, GENDER, AND EMPIRE IN NINETEENTH-
CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE**

by

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B.A., English, Illinois State University, 2003
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DISSERTATION

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Requirements for the Degree of

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DEDICATION

To Mom and Dad for their unfailing love and support

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THE VISUAL EXCHANGE: THE INTERSECTION OF VISION, GENDER, AND EMPIRE
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

In my dissertation, I examine key moments in fictional and autobiographical texts when gender construction and colonization intersect and create the possibility for reciprocal visual exchange between disparate people. In a visual exchange, the participants actively and meaningfully look at one another, at the same time acknowledging the other's subjectivity. I argue that these moments hint at the subliminal utopian desire by the author, and perhaps the reader, for a more equal, even democratic, community. I study a range of texts written during the long nineteenth century by male and female authors, including Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), *The History of Mary Prince* (1831), Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), and Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883). Despite the rich scholarship in recent years on race and imperialism, gender, and the gaze as they are conceived in the nineteenth century, it is rare to find scholarship that examines the intersections of all three, and none of the texts I study have been the subject of this kind of intersectional analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

In an introductory scene of Olive Schreiner's 1883 novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, two pre-teen girls, Lyndall and Em, sit on a "kopje," a small hill rising up from the African veld. Fourteen-year-old Waldo approaches, wearing "an aged jacket much too large for him, and rolled up at the wrists, and as of old, a pair of dilapidated 'vel-shoens' and a felt hat." When he reaches the girls, Lyndall lifts "her eyes to his face," and Waldo presents her with a gift of a few blades of grass, which she pins on her blue dress. "They look nice there," says Waldo, "awkwardly rubbing his great hands and watching her." Lyndall responds, "Yes; but the pinafore spoils it all; it is not pretty" (12-13). This brief scene acts as a metonym for my whole project in which I examine the negotiation of gender, class, and vision within a colonial or postcolonial setting. First, Schreiner sets up the otherness of the colonial setting of South Africa and the ways that empire affects the characters. In this novel, living in the outer regions of empire creates a unique egalitarian mode of existence for the three white children because British societal norms have not yet intruded. However, Waldo's obviously lower economic status, as represented by his clothing, suggests that class inevitably plays a role; and the invisibility of the native people occupying the land implies that even sympathetic authors can have blind spots. In addition, the fact that Waldo gives Lyndall a gift that she turns into an ornament to wear and increase her beauty indicates that women are often turned into an object of the male gaze, whether it is their intention or not. The intersection of race, class, and gender in this scene demonstrates the uneven and dynamic relationships between the three that authors such as Olive Schreiner were interested in exploring in their work. I argue that it is

through vision and the visual exchange that readers more clearly see and understand these complex interactions.

It is the seemingly minor reference to Lyndall lifting her eyes to Waldo's face that is the most compelling for my argument, because it suggests that at this moment they are on somewhat equal terms. Waldo and Lyndall can meet each other's looks and accept that the other is a fellow human subject, providing a moment of connection. As I argue in the rest of the dissertation, though, it is hardly ever that easy. In *The Story of an African Farm* it is only at the beginning when the two major characters are children that they are able to engage in a reciprocal visual exchange. As Waldo and Lyndall grow older, they lose their clarity of vision to cultural prejudices that prevent them from looking at each other on equal grounds. In fact, the plot of the *The Story of an African Farm* encapsulates the "plot" of my entire project, from analysis of an initial innocent but achievable visual exchange between two hierarchically different identities to their mutual desire for a connection, with the ultimate reality that it is utterly impossible to sustain the reciprocity. In the following chapters, I examine key moments in fictional and autobiographical texts when gender construction and colonization intersect through the vector of the visual and create the possibility for reciprocal visual exchange, which hints at the subliminal desire by the author, and perhaps the reader, for a more equal, even democratic, community.¹

I will study a wide range of texts written during the long nineteenth century by male and female authors, slave and free, canonical and non-canonical, including Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*, *The History of Mary Prince*, Charles Dickens's *American*

¹ The texts may project hope for an egalitarian world, but whether the reader acknowledges and acts on that hope is uncertain. It would depend on the reader learning from the visual lessons the texts attempt to teach.

Notes and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*.

Despite the rich scholarship in recent years on race and imperialism, gender, and the gaze as they are conceived in the nineteenth century, it is rare to find scholarship that examines the intersections of all three, and none of the texts I study have been the subject of this kind of intersectional analysis.² By using feminist, post-structuralist, and post-colonial theory as well as theoretical analysis of the gaze versus the look, I identify moments in nineteenth-century British texts wherein a reciprocal exchange of looks occurs or seems possible. However, various cultural contexts that subjugate colonial or gendered others create barriers (or veils) that need to be overcome before an exchange can happen. These barriers often involve notions of identity and subjectivity, in which the subordinate other is considered inferior to the dominant imperial subject, sometimes even sub-human. If these veils can be lifted, even momentarily, then, I argue, the authors encourage their readers to see in a new way and to hope for a better, more democratic world. At the very least, even if the author is embedded in and co-opted by a hierarchical system, s/he cannot resist the impulse created in the text that may act subliminally on the reader. Because the barriers cannot be destroyed completely, the texts only give the reader glimpses of these exchanges. The authors usually are not trying explicitly to create total equality—in fact, they all accept a form of hierarchy—but the desire for revolutionary reform erupts in subliminal traces in their texts. That these moments exist at all suggests

² While I examine the ways gender, race, class, and vision are negotiated in the texts, I find that a true intersectional analysis is perhaps beyond my reach and that of other scholars. I am unable to discuss all of these identity categories at once, so in my chapters I go back and forth among them, doing my best to point out instances of overlap and emergence. However, I choose to keep the particular language of intersection, because I, like the authors of the texts I analyze, have hope for the future despite current complications and “impossibilities.” I have hope that feminist and post-colonial scholars will continue to strive for a nuanced, intersectional analysis and true polyvision.

that these texts do, to a certain extent, challenge the construction of binary power structures as well as conservative, hierarchical ways of looking and interacting with the inferior other. Adapting Bakhtin's notion of polyphony—the need for multiple voices in order for Truth to be approached—I argue that the novel and fictional spaces represent an opportunity to examine the polyvisual vision, because as Bakhtin asserts that Truth needs multiple voices (polyphony), understanding the nineteenth century and its literature needs multiple looks (polyvisual).

My argument rests on a number of studies on the ideology of the visual. What scholars of visual studies have been uncovering in recent decades is that twenty-first-century ocular centrality³ is not new but has been steadily increasing for the past several hundred years, if not for thousands of years.⁴ As a result, our language is flush with visual metaphors, as Martin Jay points out in the opening lines of his book, *Downcast Eyes*. It is almost impossible to refrain entirely from using expressions of vision, such as “see,” “view,” “observe,” “appear,” “watch,” and “survey,” because of the widespread incorporation of these terms in the language of analysis and examination. The Enlightenment idea that seeing is knowing has become so foundational that most modern scholars do not even question their ubiquitous use of these visual terms. I will not strictly avoid using such terms; however, when I do use them I will be very self-conscious and deliberate. I will use two terms, “look” and “gaze,” in very specific ways. In her book

³ Martin Jay and Gary Shapiro both use the term “ocular centric[ity]” when describing Western culture. And I am speaking specifically of Western visual history within this project.

⁴ Most scholars place the turn to the visual in the eighteenth or nineteenth century (despite Plato's privileging of vision in the 4th century BCE in his “Allegory of the Cave”). Schwartz and Przyblyski suggest in their introduction to a widely used visual culture reader, “the Western visual tradition may well be the most widespread and durable legacy of the Western imperialism of the nineteenth century” (9).

Looking for the Other, E. Ann Kaplan defines a “look” as a process, a relation which indicates a curiosity about the other, a desire to know the other. She then defines a “gaze” as a one-way subjective vision, which indicates extreme anxiety and an attempt to deny the subjectivity of the other. I borrow these definitions for my own argument about particular works of nineteenth-century British literature, wherein the objectifying gaze is often used by a representative of the hegemonic group. In turn, the reciprocal look becomes a kind of metonym for human subjectivity. Yet, acknowledging the subjectivity of others is often complicated by visual culture.

“Visual culture” is not a static term; scholars have been constructing varying definitions for the past two decades. Depending on the context of the discussion, the definition of “visual culture” can focus on the analysis or process of seeing, and/or it can focus on the objects or images. For this project, my use of “visual culture” encompasses both of these aspects as well as a specific historical context. As Chris Jenks explains in “The Centrality of the Eye in Western Culture,” visual culture is an exploration of “the social context of both the ‘seeing’ and the ‘seen’” (16). Visual culture is thus involved in the visual experience of constructing the self, whether as subject or object, active or passive, or as my analysis shows, the blurred edges of those constructions. And, as John Berger posits, the look and the gaze are based on, imply, and construct a relation between things and ourselves, as well as ourselves and others (9). Visual culture also can be used as a tool that teaches how one sees, because it influences how the viewer reacts to the object being viewed, usually imposing some form of judgment. Likewise, the unequal power structure that is inherent in a seeing/seen construction means that any disruption can result in a feeling of threat and fragmentation. However, disruption can also suggest a

reorganization of power that encourages the possibility of a more egalitarian and connected community. As Nicholas Mirzoeff claims, scholars of visual culture should try to encompass a “transient, transnational, transgendered way of seeing” (18) in order to more fully represent our diverse world. But, as my analysis shows, this more accepting look is almost impossible to sustain, especially in the nineteenth century.⁵ These moments of seeing, however, *do* interrupt the hierarchical positioning of the Romantic and Victorian texts I analyze, showing that new political forms concomitant with ways of seeing are coming to bear on the culture and its texts. These texts engage their readers’ vision as well by revealing inequalities and urging them to learn to look in a new way.⁶

With the increase in knowledge about the physiological functions of the eye and the advent of new technologies, nineteenth-century England and its literature are key sites for analysis of the repercussions of an increasingly visual culture. The nineteenth-century emphasis on the picturesque, exhibitions, and illustrated texts taught people how to understand objects, people, and landscapes in a uniquely visual way by encouraging people to see difference and equate that with inferiority. Thus, visual culture reinforced hierarchies of power wherein the white British male was at the top while women, lower classes, and other races and nationalities were delineated down the scale. Because visual

⁵ A “transient, transnational, transgendered way of seeing” is not entirely possible now, either. However, I would argue that more people desire it now and at least attempt a more egalitarian look. One simply needs to read current scholarship in visual culture, postcolonialism, or feminism.

⁶ This audience involvement is very different from the way JanMohamed describes colonial literature: “The colonialist’s need to perpetuate racial differences also prevents him . . . from placing the object of his representation, the racial Other, on the same temporally and socially valorized plane as that occupied by the author and reader. This complicity between reader and author encourages an even further distancing of the represented world” (69). The contradiction presented by my chosen texts suggests that despite their (post)colonial settings, they actively resist some of the stereotypes of colonial literature.

practices stem from and reproduce inequalities in power and position, the possibility for reciprocity becomes much more difficult to achieve and sustain.

As literary criticism incorporating visual theory and visual technologies has exploded in recent years, many of the newer analyses have been built on the foundations of Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault's examinations of the various power structures inherent in vision and the gaze. Foucault's description of the Panopticon as an ideological apparatus taught a whole generation of Western critics that vision is a disciplinary tactic and that anyone can hold visual power. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault claims that the disciplinary power of the Panopticon separates the community and its constant exchanges into individuals who never interact with others. Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, upon which, of course, Foucault bases his theory, is a prison structure consisting of numerous individual cells surrounding a central observation tower. The segregation of prisoners into solitary cells prevents them from interacting with other prisoners. In addition, the constant surveillance enacted through the structure of the Panopticon allows the viewer to control all the power, for the prisoner is always the observed and never the observer. Foucault actually describes visibility as a trap, arguing "Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (200).

I am particularly interested in how this one-way, seemingly all-powerful vision becomes the objectifying gaze used by the dominant social group. The object of this gaze is "never a subject of communication"; the objectified individual is never allowed the ability to claim a look of his/her own or interact with others. However, as many theorists

have argued, Foucault's argument about the gaze is always already a myth, because the world is not constructed as a prison, and the other does have the ability to look no matter how much the observer may want to deny it.⁷ Of course, the dominant social group tries to enforce the one-way gaze anyway. As Nicholas Mirzoeff explains, "Panopticism, then, was a willed form of seeing in which the refusal to see certain objects or people was as constitutive of its success as the perception of self or others" (11). Thus, panopticism and its one-way vision only works if the viewer actively denies the possibility of a return look from the inferior other.

In my chapter on *The Wild Irish Girl*, I briefly discuss what Jacqueline Labbe calls the "prospect gaze," which men embody when they stake a claim from a superior perspective. She argues that the commanding view from the top was the purview of male landowners and became a metaphor for the social, political, and aesthetic power men wield and deny to women. Similarly, Mary Louise Pratt describes the way in which the imperial male viewer takes on the role of "monarch-of-all-I-survey" (197). She argues that European explorers created a particular discovery discourse in which they described to their audience back home what they had "discovered," which, of course, was already known by the natives of the area. While I argue that the protagonist of Owenson's novel exhibits this role early in the century, *The Illustrated London News* reinforces the white male conquering gaze over seventy years later in 1879, suggesting that this form of seeing was ubiquitous in the nineteenth century.

⁷ As Jean-Paul Sartre says, "the Other is not only the one whom I see but the one who sees me" (228).



Figure 1: Cover Illustration in *The Illustrated London News* (7 June 1879)

Figure 1 reflects in some ways the Foucauldian one-way gaze that asserts one's superiority over that which is being observed. In this particular case, the British imperial soldier is positioned on high ground with weapons, representing the military force of England.⁸ He is gazing down on an alien African landscape, which gives a hint of threat despite the absence of any Africans in the frame. The image also reflects JanMohamed's argument that "the colonialist's military superiority ensures a complete projection of his

⁸ In an article on Thomas Pringle and African landscapes, David Bunn argues that "to look at representation in the colonies, therefore, is perhaps to have privileged insight into what is most resilient, most dominant, and at the same time most politically constraining in the European landscape tradition" (128). While he is primarily focused on landscape aesthetics, Bunn's identification of a prominent figure positioned from a commanding vantage point gazing out on a landscape "emptied of rival human presence" seems to accurately describe the above Figure 1, again suggesting this was a common topos. The examination of this image alongside the literary texts I have chosen reinforces imperial attitudes of surveillance and domestication. In addition, as Jay Appleton describes, the frame of the picture is always there to remind the audience that it is only a picture; the observer is safe outside the frame (Mitchell, "Imperial" 16).

self on the Other: exercising his assumed superiority, he destroys without any significant qualms the effectiveness of indigenous economic, social, political, legal, and moral systems and imposes his own versions of these structures on the Other” (66). The visualization of the white British soldier surrounded by weapons and proudly defending his territory reflects the imperialist ideology that England’s military superiority gives him the right to claim African land for England. This picture accompanied stories of the Zulu War, in which African tribes were fighting to retain their land and resist colonization. But this image ignores the rights of the native and instead imposes the strong image of British male identity as superior to all others.

Foucault describes visual power as a means to both isolate and discipline, but he also indicates that the observer position can be held by anyone; he claims, “Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine” (202). The division between seer and seen and the power inherent in the former and the lack of power inherent in the latter is a key idea in visual studies. In Foucault’s theoretical system, the potential for anyone to be the observer/seer initially seems unlikely because ideological and societal structures would seem to prevent anyone outside the dominant group from reversing or blurring that position; and the dominant group would resist any sharing of power. But the space Foucault leaves for the possibility of anyone claiming that visual power complicates the all-powerful position of the superior subject with the one-way observing gaze. Therefore, Foucault’s unidirectional gaze is not entirely stable and could potentially be disrupted.

Likewise, while this idea of an open observer position is important, the way in which Foucault discusses power and the gaze does not sufficiently consider the

complexities of gender and race, which are an important part of my argument. Foucault's analysis does not take into account the internalized barriers to agency or subjectivity that women and people of color have to overcome (Deveaux). The contrast between violence and power he sets up by claiming that slavery is not about power is also arguable.⁹ In addition, Jonathan Crary claims most scholars following Foucault now assume that from the mid-1800s on, vision and perception is fragmented and shocking. But I am skeptical of the total fragmentation of the crowd Foucault suggests, especially when he seems to contradict his claim of fragmentation by later writing, "power relations are rooted in the system of social networks" ("Subject" 793). One is never entirely isolated from the social community, because even if a group is marginalized outside the ruling power, they can still influence others. Likewise, as Lauren Goodlad argues, in Bentham's original plan for the panopticon, the central observer would be overseen, "superintended," by the public (543). Thus, even the powerful superior position is subject to outside forces. Cultural prejudices may make connections difficult, and the application of a one-way objectifying gaze might suggest solipsism is the only possible outcome. But the moments I glimpse in the texts prove that assumption false. I find that within the texts I analyze, authors struggle to create characters who can create connections (even if only momentarily) with other people, despite gender and colonial position.¹⁰

⁹ In "The Subject and Power," Foucault argues that "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (790). Because slaves are not free and in chains, the relationship between master and slave is not about power but physical constraint. The life and agency of a slave cannot be reduced to simple physical constraint, and while the masters may treat slaves as subhuman, they are not.

¹⁰ In her analysis of nineteenth-century Victorian Liberalism, Elaine Hadley argues "to be free is not—as in crude liberal thought—to escape to some autonomous realm outside power but, rather, to exercise one's own power to influence and be influenced by others" (qtd. in Goodlad 545).

Post-colonial and race theorists have explored the ways in which the dominant social group sets up a binary between “us” and “them.” Regarding vision, a seer/seen or observer/observed binary repeats this unequal power structure. Traditionally, this dualistic structure positions the dominant group as the primary subject and any peoples outside the group as the “other,” as objects lacking human subjectivity. In his master/slave dialectic, Hegel posits a kind of reciprocity between the two. In *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807), Hegel argues that self-consciousness is only possible when one encounters the other. If one ignores or negates the other, then the other remains an object rather than an equal subject. Or, one can try to assert his/her will over the other. If one accepts the other, then the subject/object binary breaks down. But the master-slave dialectic takes over, and self-consciousness is still elusive. The master is dependent on the slave’s labour, and the slave is never a free subject despite being closer to his/her productions and seeing both his position and that of the master. Thus, there is a sort of reciprocal need in terms of gaining self-consciousness, because it is only when both master and slave realize through mutual recognition that they are equal can the problem be resolved. On the other hand, Frantz Fanon argues that the slave is completely othered, completely separate. Similarly, Albert Memmi claims that colonizers dehumanized the colonized, which worked to negate any responsibility they had to treat the other as more than an animal or object. As Abdul JanMohamed explains, “Motivated by his desire to conquer and dominate, the imperialist configures the colonial realm as a confrontation based on differences in race, language, social customs, cultural values, and modes of production,” leaving the European to see the other in terms of “identity or difference” (64). Most chose difference. In his influential *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains how

European and American literary and cultural representations cast non-Western people as Oriental Others, who have no voice and thus cannot resist. These representations are premised on stereotypes that help position the Europeans as superior; but these stereotypes must be constantly repeated in order to continue to hold weight (Said; Bhabha, "The Other Question). This repetition often occurred through images presented in periodicals and other visual culture. Also, the exotic, colonized other is often sexualized and feminized (Said; Gilman), which reinforces gender stereotypes wherein the female is the objectified other in relation to the male subject.

"A Girl Sacrificed to Ju-Ju," Figure 2 below, demonstrates the way the racial and gendered other is both inferior and sexualized. From an 1873 issue of *The Illustrated London News*, the illustration shows the purported savagery and ignorance of the Africans through their use of sacrifice, which Christian Europeans would consider barbaric and unenlightened. Moreover, the foreign setting, with palm trees and an alligator in the background, serves to exoticize the girl. Likewise, the partial nudity and beauty of the African girl emphasizes her role as an erotic object for the gaze. Perhaps most telling is how much the image mirrors the stereotypical illustrations of slaves published half a century before. I further discuss this eroticization of black women in the chapter on *The History of Mary Prince*. These kinds of images reinforce unequal racial and gender ideologies throughout the nineteenth century, but the texts I analyze in this study subliminally challenge these ideologies.

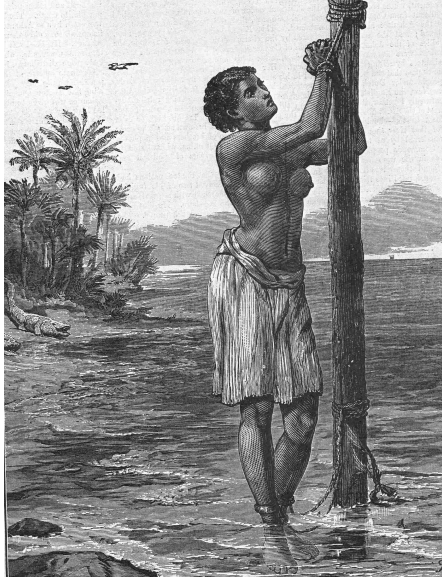


Figure 2: “A Girl Sacrificed to Ju-Ju” in *The Illustrated London News* (29 November 1873)

In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger famously declares that “men act and women appear” (47). He explains that in regards to vision, the man is always the surveyor of women, and the women construct their identities based on this idea of being looked at. Laura Mulvey explores this idea in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” which has become a foundational text in visual and film theory. She asserts that we are taught to see woman as a signifier for the male other, where the woman displayed is both an erotic object for the characters in the story and the film spectator. The spectator thus identifies with the male protagonist and his active power (of the gaze), resulting in a sense of omnipotence. The female is a spectacle for the male gaze, but is also always a threat or reminder of the castration complex that signals sexual difference. Teresa de Lauretis builds on some of these ideas in her examination of the subjectivity of woman in language and cinema. She ultimately argues in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics,*

Cinema that female subjectivity is indelibly linked with sexuality, but it is also “an ongoing construction” (de Lauretis 159). Clearly these feminist analyses of the male gaze as featured in film also work well to examine how the man is the active viewing subject while the woman is the passive object of his gaze in nineteenth-century British texts. Visual culture reflected these gender divisions just as it did with racial ones. Thus, in this dissertation, my usage of the term “other” reflects the simplest definition as that which represents difference and inferiority to white, male, British hegemony.

But, as I argue, there are moments of resistance, moments of disruption and slippage. The object on the receiving end of the gaze is in opposition to the subject, who would be an equal participant in an exchange of looks. While bell hooks speaks of “agency,” I apply the more specific term “subjectivity” in my argument. I prefer “subjectivity” because it connotes the position of subject as opposed to object as well as implying the humanity of the subject. I also fully embrace the double meaning of “subject” as one who is “the author of and responsible for its actions” and as “a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission” (Althusser 1507). Althusser’s claim that subjectivity is formed through social forces, through ideologies, is also important. Mary Wollstonecraft makes a similar argument at the end of the eighteenth century when she says in the *Vindications to the Rights of Woman* that people are formed by the society in which they live, suggesting that the authors I examine might have had similar ideas. Althusser’s differentiation between the subject and the Subject (as God) is also relevant. While I do not want to bring God specifically into my argument, I do want to link the god-like position of the Subject to the dominant order, because those in the dominant

order see themselves in that position; it is another form, as it were, of the god-trick. This hierarchical position suggests power and control and easily links to the prospect view and other positions of vision that construct a strict, clear hierarchy of visual power. Althusser also claims that in order for “everything [to] be all right” there needs to be a “mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects’ recognition of each other, and finally the subject’s recognition of himself” (1507).¹¹

Feminist “standpoint theory” is another important idea informing my argument. Standpoint theory is based on the Hegelian idea of the dual perspective of the slave, who has a personal perspective based on experience and a perspective of his/her oppressor based on survival. Standpoint theory was originally focused on the dual perspective of women in their oppressed position, but scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins and Chela Sandoval challenge the idea that gender is the only substantive identity category; rather, it is one of a number of major categories that intersect to describe a subject. Modern feminist scholars now attempt to embrace the idea of multiple or oppositional consciousnesses, which allows for subjects to have several perspectives based on their multiple positions within different groups. The texts I examine seem to suggest (again, at least momentarily) that we as readers might gain a better understanding of the inequalities in society by observing them through the look of the gendered, racial other; in turn, readers then have a better sense of these new intersecting positions.¹² Patricia Hill

¹¹ Althusser, of course, is articulating these points about the subject/Subject in the context of Ideological State Apparatuses, particularly the Christian religious ideology. However, the idea that the world would be a better place if all individuals accepted others’ subjectivity is appealing, regardless of the specific ideological context.

¹² Most of the texts I examine are fiction, which means that the interactions between characters and cultures are always already mediated through the authorial and reading subject position. The narrative sets up a seeing/seen relation in regards to the

Collins describes the “outsider within” as the stranger who is able to see patterns within a particular context that those who are part of the dominant group cannot. She speaks specifically of the distinctive perspective of black domestics working for white families, because they are immersed in white culture but are not considered part of that group. Thus, she argues that the inferior’s unique standpoint on the dominant social group allows her to recognize, and potentially challenge, inequalities the dominant group often takes for granted. She asserts that racist and sexist ideologies held by the dominant group result in those outside the group being treated as “objects lacking full human subjectivity.” She goes on to describe the ways black women and white women are both objectified as not fully human, thus becoming “eligible for race/gender specific modes of domination.” But if the dominated group refuses their assigned otherness, that very refusal suggests that they are in fact active human subjects (Collins 160).

In this study, all the authors I analyze fit this category of outsider within to some degree, as do the protagonists in their texts. For example, Sydney Owenson was the daughter of an Irish father and English mother, and she wrote Irish national tales for a British audience. Her novel is about both a British male and an Irish female in English-controlled Ireland less than a decade after the Act of Union. Mary Prince’s

author/reader and the characters/cultures being represented. However, Elaine Hadley argues that “Like real events, stories and plays represented a social exchange between actor and audience that was presumed to evoke social feeling through sympathetic recognition . . . the exchanges enacted by sentimental fiction reflect those occurring generally in the larger culture” (17). Thus, the interaction between the reader and the text might result in a sympathetic exchange where the reader’s emotional response to characters and events in the story influences the way s/he then interacts in the real world. So if texts show their audience how they might interact in a more egalitarian manner with sympathetic others, then the audience might be more likely to do so in real world situations.

autobiographical narrative follows her life as a slave in the Caribbean and is written for a white British audience. Charles Dickens, while a white British male, also comes from a lower-middle-class background; and the main characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which I analyze in Chapter 3, are British men, one upper class and one lower class, in the strange post-colonial setting of America. Lastly, Olive Schreiner is a woman born in the British colony of South Africa writing about second-generation European colonial settlers in South Africa for a British audience. Because of the complex intersections of race, class, and gender inherent to these texts, I argue that these texts are particularly good choices for gaining a new and unique perspective because the outsider is aware of both insider and outsider positions. The authors and their characters are aware of the dominant British ideologies, but their slightly outsider status allows them to recognize the prejudices and inequalities the white British men are constantly, and usually unconsciously, repeating; whereas if the authors were simply insiders *or* outsiders, they would not necessarily be aware of those blind spots.¹³ For example, I chose to examine Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* because she was familiar with both Ireland and England while not wholly fitting into either. I chose that novel over Owenson's *The Missionary*, which is a romance that takes place in India, because she had never visited India and so relied heavily on stereotypes. Thus, the authors' "outsider within" positions give the reader a clearer understanding of British people and culture in the nineteenth century. Likewise, the reader's similar position, immersed in the text but not part of it, perhaps allows for

¹³ I am not arguing that solidly middle or upper-class men could not portray visual prejudices and inequalities. It simply would be harder for them to do so. Likewise, people who had never travelled outside of England would be less likely to engage meaningfully with "others"—this is true in current times as well. While it is impossible to escape entirely one's cultural background and prejudices, those people who are open to new experiences might be more likely to see in a polyvisual manner.

insight into inequalities or moments of resistance that the author may not have consciously intended but subliminally erupt from the text.¹⁴

When considering the visual relationship between two disparate people or cultures, it is important to note that the person who is part of the hegemony takes the powerful subject position while the other, whether because of gender, race, or class, is always put into the powerless object position. This unequal power structure operates under the assumption that the other is always the observed and never the observer. The other is often different and exotic, but entirely knowable and visible (Bhabha), even hyper-visible (Yancy). Furthermore, the other is also supposed to be invisible in the sense of not having a look of his/her own. In her essay "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination," bell hooks analyzes how black people (particularly black servants) were supposed to aspire to invisibility and never return the look of their white masters. hooks argues that the gaze reinforces whiteness at the same time it reinforces the invisibility of the other (in this case black slaves). She explains that black slaves would be punished for looking at their white masters, because they were supposed to be objects that lacked the capacity to see and judge. By forcing slaves to relinquish the power to look at the master, slave owners denied slaves their subjectivity and humanity. Slaves, both men and women, looked downward so as to avoid provoking their owners into punishing them. Similarly, the colonial other should not have an eye of his or her own. In looking back, in returning the imperial gaze, he or she threatens traditional power stratifications in regards to both gender and race. In other words, if the object of the gaze makes the colonizer

¹⁴ I am fully conscious of the fact that readers are multiple and diverse and that they do not read or interpret in the same way. Some readers are certainly more likely than others to see and understand these moments. However, the reader must be included, because the subliminal hope the texts reveal can only be directed towards the reader.

visible by returning his look, it implies that the master can be analyzed and potentially disciplined. A colonial other, like the black slaves and servants hooks discusses, should not assert equality by seeming to observe her/his superiors. Similarly, as a female object, she should not disrupt the male-subject/female-object binary that gives men power.

As mentioned earlier, Said claims that Orientalism created others without voices. Gayatri Spivak presents a similar argument in her “Can the Subaltern Speak?” claiming that the female subaltern cannot speak because no one is willing to listen, because “speaking is a transaction between speaker and listener,” which implies two active participants.¹⁵ However, Benita Parry argues that there are, in fact, moments of resistance where the subaltern does speak. While I focus on vision as opposed to speech, Spivak and Parry’s points about the (in)ability to create a dialogue or exchange is directly relevant to my investigation. I consider vision to be a form of communication within these texts in the sense that it can reinforce or break down existing power structures and that a reciprocal exchange of looks is key to this process. Reversing the gaze (and binaries) is not enough; both participants must be willing to accept the look and subjectivity of the other, in other words, to “listen” as Spivak posits.

As a variety of scholars have demonstrated over the past several decades, binary oppositions are much too reductive to work in most situations. In her famous “Manifesto for Cyborgs,” Donna Haraway examines and resists the binary oppositions 1960s and 70s feminists relied on. She points out the falseness of these oppositions (male/female, active/passive), and instead imagines a new mode of consciousness wherein we hybridize

¹⁵ I do not want to equate all marginal peoples’ experiences, and Charles Dickens’s white male characters are certainly not subalterns. However, many of the ways that subalterns are othered can be analogized in the treatment of women and lower classes in the nineteenth century.

these binaries and acknowledge their permeability. Gloria Anzaldua conceives of a similar idea regarding the “mestiza consciousness,” wherein a cross-pollination of racial, ideological, and cultural consciousness challenges dualistic thinking. This relates back to the outsider within position, in which the outsider can include multiple consciousnesses, and polyphonic or polyvisual blurring of traditional boundaries. Feminists are not the only ones who question the use of binaries; Jacques Derrida is famous for it. And while I do not want to impose twentieth or twenty-first century ideas on nineteenth-century texts, I argue that the texts I examine have moments where the gaze is not only reversed but also exchanged in a more reciprocal look, which breaks down binary structures.

By a reciprocal exchange of looks, I mean that the participants actively look at one another. In order for this exchange to be reciprocal, though, the participants must be open to acknowledging the other’s subjectivity. Part of that openness is curiosity or a desire to know the unique individuality of the other. Reciprocity is difficult to sustain for more than a brief amount of time. However, the fact that these moments appear in nineteenth-century texts at all suggests that these texts challenge conventional ways of looking, interacting with the other, and dualistic power structures.

E. Ann Kaplan suggests that the desire to know the other is a form of curiosity, which she admits can still be oppressive but is in direct opposition to a denial of the other. There must be this willingness to learn about the other in order for there to be any kind of communication; as John Berger states, “to look is an act of choice” (8). Vision is not always a choice—we are bombarded with images constantly; however, to look, using Kaplan’s definition, is certainly a choice, because it requires acknowledgment of the other as a human subject. However, in her essay “Eating the Other,” bell hooks argues

that modern consumer culture encourages the dominant culture to get to know the other without ever questioning the representations that define otherness. She argues that a (physical) desire for the other is not enough, that mutual recognition of racism must exist in order to have a more truthful encounter. Not all of the encounters examined in this dissertation are between different races, but a similar approach might be used to study any marginalized or othered people, including, I suggest, women and the lower classes. A curiosity or desire needs to be supplemented by an acknowledgment of the divide between the two people(s) and the awareness that the other is also a human subject. Mary Louise Pratt uses the phrase “reciprocal vision” when discussing Mungo Park’s narrative. She identifies the reciprocity when Park both sees and is seen by the Africans he encounters. Park acknowledges that the Africans have the right (and curiosity) to observe him as much as he does them. As long as the Africans acknowledge his unique subjectivity in return, then this encounter is indeed a reciprocal exchange.¹⁶ One of the reasons this exchange is possible, though, is the face-to-face interaction.

Certainly, ideas of an interaction with the other often lead back to twentieth-century French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. His idea of the “face-to face relation” is that when one directly encounters the other, one is presented with the ethical responsibility for the other. In its defenseless nudity, the other’s face declares, “You shall not kill,” because there is a trace of God, the infinite other. Levinas’s ideas are similar to

¹⁶ Throughout my study, I put the impetus to change on the dominant group. However, it is equally important that the subordinated group is also willing to accept the unique subjectivity of the other. I primarily focus on the challenges that the dominant group faces in attempting to engage an egalitarian look, but the subordinated group also has a variety of barriers to overcome, including but not limited to the resistance of engaging at all with the people who subjugated them. Although this is outside the focus of my current study, this alternate angle deserves future study.

Martin Buber's "I and Thou" relation, which is reciprocal and mutual between two subjects. Buber also posits the "I-It," wherein the relation is between an active subject and passive object. Levinas agrees with Buber to the extent that the self is a relation between "I" and "Thou," but he rejects the notion of reciprocity. He believes there is always already an asymmetry because of the sense of ethical responsibility one feels for the other. Certainly, reciprocity is hard to achieve and may even be ultimately impossible because of asymmetry. Nevertheless, I am attracted to the addition of ethics to an interaction with the other because it suggests the other is a human subject worthy of ethical treatment. But Levinas's idea that asymmetry is a result of a feeling of ethical responsibility is arguable. Instead, I argue that the inequality and disconnection is caused by the threat to the dominant social group's power.¹⁷ By constantly keeping other groups in an inferior position, the ruling group creates its identity based on that superiority. If the dominated group resists their placement, then that also threatens those in a higher position. Therefore, the hegemonic group works extra hard to, in turn, deny that reciprocity and connection, because it's easier to ignore those who are inferior.

It will be recalled that bell hooks states that white masters denied the gaze of their black servants, and slave owners often did the same thing with their slaves. One of the reasons for this was undoubtedly the idea that if the slaves had the ability to look just as other human beings look, then the masters would find it more difficult to treat them badly. In addition, the returned look meant that the white masters were no longer invisible themselves, but could be judged and analyzed. Similarly, the visibility of the

¹⁷ The ideas of ethical responsibility and power can obviously go hand-in-hand, but this is another aspect that the dominant group tries to deny or redefine to better fit its often capitalistic and imperialistic goals.

other meant that they had to be acknowledged in some fashion; as Joan Scott argues, “indeed, it is the possibility that they can be seen that threatens order and ultimately overcomes repression” (Scott 82).

The subject’s unfamiliarity with the other also creates a threat for the subject because of the lack of clear definitions. As Homi Bhabha describes in *The Location of Culture*, the colonized can become a mimic man of the colonizer, thus creating a displacement and “slippage” as the observer becomes the observed and the unique identity of the colonizer is challenged. If the other can so closely imitate the colonizer, the colonizer must not be that different or superior. Similarly, Bhabha also contends that the female other “displays the unhomely world, ‘the halfway between, not defined’ world of the colored” (Bhabha, “The World,” 452), obviously referencing Freud’s *unheimlich*, the uncanny, which always has an element of fear attached to it. Women are similar to men, but not quite the same, and the male’s inability to fully understand the female is frightening. In *Claim of Reason*, Stanley Cavell argues that the body is “a veil, or a blind” that prevents one from truly seeing the other (368). Here Cavell uses “seeing” interchangeably with “knowing,” in particular reference to the soul. However, he also puts the blame on the seer because it is the inability or reluctance to interpret accurately that creates the blindness. He admits, “I avoid this issue [of blindness] by projecting this darkness upon the other” (368). Moreover, Anne McClintock argues in her book *Imperial Leather* that Europeans imagined Africa and the Americas as sites of “porno-tropics,” that is, as “a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears” (22). These fears were repeatedly reinforced through various forms of visual culture, resulting in a kind of “commodity racism.” McClintock

argues that in Victorian advertising and photography, expositions, and museums, “the narrative of imperial Progress [was converted into] mass-produced *consumer spectacles*” (33). Thus, rather than a reciprocal exchange of looks, the other is either outright rejected or returned to themselves as something different/distorted. George Yancy makes the case that when a black man encounters a white person, the black man’s original sense of self is destroyed when he sees the white person’s reaction to him. So after the encounter, he has a new understanding of his identity based on what others saw in him.

Another barrier that might prevent a reciprocal exchange of looks is an economic one, for an exchange inevitably has a connection with economics. In capitalist economics, an exchange is based on opposing relations between commodities of equivalent value (Marx). Unfortunately, many times the other is considered a commodity¹⁸ (such as a slave or a marriageable woman or a lower-class worker), and an economic exchange would be ruined if a commodity was no longer of value. Similarly, reciprocity, according to Marshall Sahlins, “is a *between* relation, the action and reaction of two parties . . . reciprocity stipulates two sides, two distinct social-economic interests” (189). Thus, similar to the reciprocal visual exchange I discuss, economic reciprocity is also between two active participants with unique subjectivities. But to Sahlins reciprocity is not a balanced or unconditional one-for-one exchange; instead, there is a spectrum of reciprocities where “Balanced reciprocity is willingness to give for that which is received,” but this is more likely within a kinship group (190). In other words, if the person with whom one is engaging in an exchange is in one’s kin group (or we might say

¹⁸ JanMohamed claims “The European writer commodifies the native by negating his individuality, his subjectivity, so that he is now perceived as a generic being that can be exchanged for any other native” (64).

is a similar gender, race, or class) then reciprocity is more likely to occur. Both sides acknowledge the other is worthy of ethical treatment. However, the farther away one is from kin, the closer to non-kin or “others,” the more likely people are to resist balanced reciprocity. Instead, the dominant group will try to get more money (or labor) from the other while giving less in return. Elaine Hadley describes similar interactions, which she calls sympathetic exchanges rather than balanced reciprocity. Speaking specifically of the eighteenth century, she describes sympathetic exchanges as working best when people have common regional traditions and economic interests, “where, therefore, face-to-face exchange is customary and frequent” (17-18). She posits that when the people engaged in an exchange know one another personally and have a similar cultural background, they are more likely to be sympathetic and balanced.

With the Industrial Revolution, the different classes were separated more completely and rarely interacted with one another, which left fewer opportunities to engage in a sympathetic exchange and communal ties. Hadley claims that at the turn of the nineteenth century, “the non-poor more frequently saw difference, rather than sameness, when it turned its attention to the poor” (24). The texts I examine reflect this increasing divide between the classes, and I argue the divide between different races and genders as well. So, in economics a reciprocal exchange between two disparate peoples is difficult (if not impossible) to achieve, and because a visual exchange often has economic undertones, a momentary connection becomes just that much more difficult to maintain.

Ultimately, however, I argue that even the momentary exchange of looks causes a visual disruption of traditional gender, class, and racial power structures, which reveals hope for a more equal and connected world. None of the texts I analyze achieve

reciprocity beyond a few key moments, except perhaps *The Wild Irish Girl*. Yet, I argue that the hope and potential are in these texts and their subliminal cultural desires, and that, as the century itself progresses, the reality of such a community is understood in more complex ways through the intersection of vision/gender/empire. Stephen Kern has argued that Victorian art, particularly paintings portraying a romantic encounter between a man and woman, challenge the binary structure of the active male gaze and the passive female object. He claims that artists presented women as having more complex looks and subjectivities than most scholars usually allow. The fact that these visual binaries are being questioned in other forms suggests that my analysis of literary texts is only one potential area of study and future research—that these challenges to traditional ideologies were part of a wider cultural opposition to inequalities.

As a feminist and cultural studies scholar, I find it impossible to separate texts from their historical context and constantly reinforce Fredric Jameson's famous call to "always historicize" by analyzing the interpretative frameworks as well as the texts themselves. I am also influenced by Donna Haraway's claims that the ideologies represented in texts are always situated within a particular historical, cultural, geographical, gendered, and raced moment.¹⁹ By examining nineteenth-century novels that represent a humane visual interaction between disparate peoples, I must consider the different ideologies represented by each character. These ideologies are inevitably a result of the historical and cultural context filtered through the author.

¹⁹ Haraway uses the term "situated knowledges" in her essay, "Cyborg Manifesto." Likewise, Jonathan Crary argues that the observer is always "one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities, one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations" brought about by "discursive, social, technological, and institutional relations" (6).

Visual culture is inevitably entwined with the dominant ideologies of a time and place, and for scholars, nineteenth-century England is already representative of imperial and colonial forces because of its rapid expansion throughout the world, from distant colonies in Africa to those close to home, such as Ireland. In addition, traditional gender roles were being challenged by women like Mary Wollstonecraft at the beginning of the century and the New Woman at the end of the century. Consequently, the visual culture of nineteenth-century England distinctly reflects both the embedded and changing beliefs about empire and gender. I chose to analyze texts from both the Romantic and Victorian periods because British identity was confronted with imperial crises throughout the century, from the loss of the American colonies, to the union with Ireland, to the slave rebellions and eventual abolition, to the various wars fought over African territories. While all are loosely labeled “British,” the texts I use offer diverse representations of the British Empire throughout the century and portray different kinds of contact zones.²⁰ Some are between similar cultures and represent a more internal racism (Ireland/America), while others are more unfamiliar and foreign (West Indies/Africa). However, each (post)colonial space allows for a disruption or slippage of traditional British beliefs that would be more difficult in an English setting. For example, *The Wild Irish Girl* is set in Ireland, *The History of Mary Prince* takes place mostly in the West Indies, *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* visit America, and the setting of *The Story of an African Farm* is South Africa.

²⁰ The spaces created by the author where disparate people interact with one another is aptly named a “contact zone” by Mary Louise Pratt. According to Pratt, “contact zones” are “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (7).

The fear and anxiety that many Britons felt about expanding globalization was mirrored in the sheer number of images and emphasis on the visual in the nineteenth century. Britons' ideas of visual identity and "Truth" were becoming fragmented and isolated, and many scholars see this reflected in the literature.²¹ Yet, many literary works demonstrate the struggle to find some sort of connectedness through the look. By using examples of the picturesque in conjunction with *The Wild Irish Girl*; descriptions and graphics of slave markets and black females juxtaposed with *Mary Prince*; visual and verbal sketches of America and its people alongside illustrations from the novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*; and illustrations of South Africa and fashion plates together with *The Story of an African Farm*, I show how visual culture influences the way the authors and their characters react and interact with the gendered, racialized other. Specifically, I focus on key scenes in these texts where the characters interact with inferior others; but instead of always repeating the dominant culture's ideologies of gender, class, and race, the texts give the other a look and subjectivity of his or her own. On the other hand, I also suggest that the dominant cultural racist or sexist ideologies presented in visual culture prevent the connections from lasting.

I contribute to this field by closely analyzing how specific texts suggest the possibility of a reciprocal visual exchange and hence a subliminal hope for a more egalitarian community. In particular, I focus on how these primary texts use vision in an attempt to blur the gender, class, racial, and/or national lines between the subject and object, which has never been done before in terms of these texts. These texts grapple with the idea of whether the (usually) white, British, male subject can both look at and accept

²¹ See James Krasner's *The Entangled Eye*.

the look of the subordinated other. While prejudices and inequalities are constantly repeated in visual culture and subsequently influence the texts, the texts offer key moments when this visual reciprocity and hybridity seems a possibility. The moments I extract from the texts could represent what Raymond Williams would call “pre-emergent” cultural elements that offer an alternative to the dominant cultural ideology. But Williams is clear to point out that any form of emergence is very difficult, and while pre-emergence is “active and pressing” it is also “not yet fully articulated” (126), which perfectly describes the moments I analyze. The texts (perhaps subconsciously) encourage their readers to see these inequalities and to pursue a more democratic (multiple consciousness) vision. But these hopes become increasingly less realistic and more complicated as the century progresses despite, or because of, the fact that racial and gender differences were being discussed in more and more forums.

The first chapter, “‘The eye of Glorvina met mine’: Reciprocity and the Voyeuristic Artist in *The Wild Irish Girl*,” examines how Sydney Owenson in her novel *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) portrayed the encounter between a British man and an Irish woman within the context of the picturesque landscape of Ireland. The male protagonist, Horatio, continually gazes upon the Irish Glorvina (often without her knowledge) with the objectifying eye of an artist; but when his fears and prejudices are allayed by love, the two manage to achieve a mutually beneficial marriage. While there are certainly complications, this is the only text that sustains a visual exchange; perhaps because Owenson ignored some of the larger potential problems and barriers, including but not limited to the inequalities inherent in marriage and the way that cultures construct the gaze so that only lovers have access to this long-term reciprocal look. The novel does

suggest, however, a desire for a mutually beneficial and equal relationship between England and Ireland, where each can retain their individual cultures.

The second chapter, “‘We must not . . . look amiss’: The Visual and Economic Exchange in *The History of Mary Prince*,” identifies moments in Prince’s slave narrative (1831), such as the slave market scene in Bermuda, where she asserts subjectivity and agency by looking back at the white colonizers as well as directing the look of her readers. And because slavery is inevitably and inherently economic, Prince’s look challenges not just her subject position as a woman and slave but as an object with monetary value. The reciprocal visual exchange is more difficult to achieve in this text, but there are moments where Prince encourages her readers to see the inequalities, suggesting that her readers are a key part of the reciprocal exchange she strives for. Because of the way she constructed her narrative, Prince implied that the abolition of slavery and equality among races would prevent many moral and ethical dilemmas.

The third chapter, “‘Don’t look at him’: The Public Eye in Charles Dickens’s America,” proceeds with a discussion of Dickens’s visit to America in the early 1840s and his subsequent 1844 novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens attempted to utilize his one-way objectifying gaze as he toured America, but I posit that traditional power structures are disrupted in scenes wherein Dickens and/or the titular character of his novel is confronted with the public gaze of the other and where he is himself placed in the position of objectified other. Through his fictional character Mark Tapley, Dickens made room for a more accepting, inclusive vision, which Dickens was unable to use himself. Through these subliminal moments, Dickens alluded to more accepting systems of class and race, where greed and selfishness are overcome.

The fourth and final chapter, “‘Because we are before your eyes you never look at us’: Blindness and Insight in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883),” analyzes how British and South African cultural prejudices regarding gender and race create blind spots that prevent the young protagonists, Waldo and Lyndall, from achieving a visual exchange and connection with each other and other people beyond childhood. However, Schreiner encouraged the audience to desire the two young people to reconnect and return to that reciprocal exchange, suggesting that she hoped we would strive for a more egalitarian and hybrid world even if it seems impossible. Schreiner dreamed of a feminist utopia where gender and race no longer matter.

The different cultural contexts of each of the stories and the increasing challenges posed by empire and gender make the visual exchange less likely over the course of the nineteenth century. However, all the authors posit through moments of visual reciprocity that maybe we *can* eventually connect with others in a mutual acknowledgment of one another’s unique subjectivity, both within the fictional world of literature and in the literal nineteenth-century multicultural world. The blending of visions across race, nationality, class, and gender may be a utopian ideal, but the curiosity and desire for such a thing suggests the nineteenth century was neither as fragmented nor as nihilistic as we might have previously thought.

CHAPTER 1: “The eye of Glorvina met mine”: Reciprocity and the Voyeuristic Artist in *The Wild Irish Girl*

“The reciprocal nature of vision is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue.”
-John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

On his first day in Ireland, Horatio, the protagonist of Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl*, comes across a “full chorus of females” weaving and singing in Irish. The scene is picturesque with its “ruinous barn,” where “a group of young females were seated round an old hag . . . all busily employed at their wheels” (Owenson 21). For several minutes, Horatio remains “unperceived,” observing the attractiveness of peasant Ireland from a safe distance. But when the women realize he is there, they immediately stop their song. The oldest woman tries to speak to Horatio, but his inability to understand Irish and hers to understand English prevents them from communicating verbally. However, this does not prevent them from having a form of conversation with their eyes.

The old woman looked up in my face and shook her head; *I* thought contemptuously—while the young ones, stifling their smiles, exchanged looks of compassion, doubtlessly at my ignorance of their language. “So many languages a man knows,” said Charles V “so many times he is a man,” and its certain *I* never felt myself less invested with the dignity of one, than while I stood twirling my stick, and “biding the encounter of the eyes,” and smiles of these “spinners in the sun.” (Owenson 21)

Horatio's initial unimpeded observation of the women is suddenly reversed when the women gaze back at him. Not only is Horatio's usual position as dominant male challenged by the women's stares but he actually feels threatened and unmanned by becoming the object of their eyes. Despite "twirling his stick," and his knowledge of other languages, he feels he has lost his dignity as a man because he has lost the power of the gaze. Horatio's discomfort with the "encounter of the eyes" of the women is emphasized by the old woman gazing directly into his face with contempt. No longer is he the invisible spectator watching condescendingly from the sideline.²² Instead, Horatio is subject to the "gaze of otherness" (Bhabha 126).²³

According to Laura Mulvey, one of the ways that a male can gain back a sense of power, such as that lost by Horatio, is to "demystify" the woman and make her the object of his voyeuristic gaze. I argue that in *The Wild Irish Girl* Horatio attempts to allay his fears of Glorvina, the novel's eponymous heroine, as a woman and as Irish by continually spying on her while remaining invisible himself. But first, he constructs her identity (and the Irish in general) in terms of the picturesque in order to keep them at an objectified distance, and he asserts this through his deceptive position as a traveling artist, a guise that serves as a kind of veil. Horatio's growing love for Glorvina and Ireland, however, eventually leads him to accept Glorvina's return look in such a way that the balance of

²² Julie Donovan claims that the women's refusal to retreat in the face of Horatio's "colonial pomposity" evokes the Fates as they tangle their threads (44), which is another suggestion of threat.

²³ Homi Bhabha sees the look of surveillance (by the colonizer) being displaced by the gaze of the disciplined, "where the observer becomes the observed and 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence" (127).

power in their relationship equalizes, at least as much and as long as it can in early nineteenth-century England.

There has been a fair amount of scholarship on *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) in the past two decades, and several critics have discussed the topics I explore: empire, gender, and vision.²⁴ However, beyond a few passing references, none have specifically analyzed how vision and the gaze work within and against the power structures within the novel. In this chapter, I will focus on how Owenson uses vision as a way to subvert traditional power stratifications in regards to gender and imperialism. First, I will briefly discuss Owenson and her personal experience with blurred lines of identification and the power of the look. Then I will explore the historical and cultural context of Owenson's character Horatio, as imperial male, gazing and interpreting the landscape of Ireland through a romanticized/picturesque eye, and perhaps more specifically an artist's eye (which is his cover story for being in Ireland). He also gazes on and interprets Glorvina; he climbs up the side of the castle to try to see in the window, he sneaks into her boudoir for a look around, and he is constantly staring at her with an "ardent gaze." The link here between Horatio's voyeuristic gaze and setting up the landscape of Ireland and the body and space of Glorvina as picturesque is the attempt to pacify and conquer a potential threat. The picturesque aesthetic is constructed as a visual framing, wherein the object can be possessed from a nonthreatening distance. The male voyeur attempting to tame or control the female object seems able to appropriate this aesthetic rather easily.

²⁴ Joseph Lew, Ina Ferris, Heather Braun, Bridget Matthews-Kane, Natasha Tessone, Julie Donovan, Susan M. Kroeg, J. Th. Leerssen, Mark A. Mossman, James Newcomer, and Katie Trumpener have addressed widely ranging topics—female writing, nationhood, gothic anxieties, performance, disability, incest, clothing, and empire—in relation to *The Wild Irish Girl*. Their work has been invaluable in bringing the novel to the attention of other scholars.

However, Glorvina does not passively submit to these gazes (nor does Ireland, with which Glorvina is implicitly linked). She looks back, and there actually seem to be more visual exchanges than verbal ones as Glorvina and Horatio are always speaking with their eyes, as it were. Glorvina's ability to look is exactly that which the colonial oppressors usually try to suppress. In contrast, Glorvina's look claims her own power and subjectivity. In fact, Glorvina at times becomes the more powerful subject, as her gaze frightens Horatio—first in a dream in which he imagines her as a Gorgon and later with her potential evil eye. This fear only emphasizes Horatio's desire to domesticate or neutralize the threat she represents. Ultimately, though, Owenson does not just reverse power by authorizing Glorvina with a counter gaze but suggests the revolutionary, if fleeting, eruption of a kind of reciprocal exchange of looks that breaks down the hierarchies of power.

The novel follows Horatio, a young British male sent to his wealthy father's Irish estate as a kind of punishment. While reevaluating his former prejudices, Horatio meets the Prince of Inismore and his daughter, Glorvina, who both represent aspects of Irish tradition and culture. The Prince and Glorvina are living in a dilapidated castle with a priest, Father John, and despite being poor are idolized by the local peasantry. Horatio and Glorvina end up falling in love and eventually marrying. There are, of course, difficulties along the way, including Horatio hiding his true identity and his father also desiring to marry Glorvina. It is not until the end of the novel, in fact, that Horatio and his father realize they have both pursued a romantic relationship with her; likewise, it is the revelation of Horatio and his father's true identities to the Prince and Glorvina that inspires much of the final dramatic action. In addition, there are underlying complications

of imperialism in that Horatio's British father now owns the land the Prince used to rule over.

The confrontation and blending of Irish and English cultures was a topic of personal interest to Owenson. As the daughter of an Irish Catholic father and an English Protestant mother, Owenson was a kind of hybrid. In addition, while her family was primarily middle class, she married into the British (minor) aristocracy with her marriage to Sir Charles Morgan in 1812, and she later became the first woman writer to receive a stipend from the British government. Yet despite her national and class ambiguity, she always self-identified as Irish. Owenson was fully aware of her hybrid position and used it to further her goals in regards to Irish nationalism. In a comment she made several years after the publication of *The Wild Irish Girl*, Owenson said her position as an Irishwoman was always at the front of her mind when she was writing the novel.²⁵ Joseph Lew explains that Owenson "saw herself as a cultural mediator, born literally into a conceptual border, both English and Irish, as well as neither" (Lew 39). She was able to use her knowledge of both cultures to point out the inaccurate stereotypes the British perpetrate on the Irish and suggest a new way of seeing for her audience.

After writing *The Wild Irish Girl*, Owenson began to appear in the salons of the aristocracy dressed as "the wild Irish girl." She would sit on the floor and display herself as a picturesque image of Ireland, deliberately putting herself in the public eye as a spectacle. According to Mary Campbell's biography of *Lady Morgan*, Owenson "played

²⁵ "I came . . . to the self-devoted task, with a diffidence proportioned to the ardour which instigated me to the attempt; for as a *woman*, a *young woman*, and an *Irishwoman*, I felt all the delicacy of undertaking a work which had for the professed theme of its discussion, circumstances of national import, and national interest" (qtd. in Fitzpatrick 48).

her harp and danced for the entertainment of those Ascendancy lords and ladies who professed to love the quaint Irish custom” (100). This public display disturbingly sets up Owenson as the visual object or the entertainment of the English nobility, simply reinforcing the distance between them and the unequal power structure. However, Natasha Tessone points out that this public persona works both within and against the stereotypes Owenson is fighting against, saying, “This paradox of Owenson’s participating, on the one hand, in the dominating orientalist discourses and, on the other, presenting herself as an exoticized object subject to the orientalizing gaze can perhaps be read in relation to her marginal position vis-à-vis both Irish and Anglo-Irish cultures” (171). Tessone suggests that Owenson’s hybridity resulted in contradictory actions that showed she did not belong in either culture (national or class) but rather swung back and forth between the two and reinforced stereotypes along the way.

In comparison, Kathryn Kirkpatrick, in the introduction to the Oxford edition of *The Wild Irish Girl*, states that Owenson was successful in bridging the gap between cultures and classes. She argues, “By constructing and performing roles for herself, Owenson became adept at crossing boundaries between classes, cultures, and gender roles” (viii-ix). Arguably, both Tessone and Kirkpatrick are correct. By continually moving among different cultures, Owenson had both an inside and outside view of the British-Irish relation; she might be said to be an “outsider within.”²⁶ She was able to see the societal constructions of gender, class, and nationality and point out certain misconceptions to her audience. Just as she put her own physical body in the public sphere, she saw the significance of putting her writing there as well. She understood how

²⁶ See Introduction.

she could challenge her audience to reconsider their own perceptions of the Irish. However, because she was appealing to an English middle- and upper-class audience, she falls victim to some of the same objectifying gazes (both as the object in her performances and as the subject in her writing) she so astutely identifies and criticizes.

Moreover, as both a child and an adult, Owenson's own interactions with the land hint at the ways she was able to maintain a picturesque distance and ignore the class implications inherent in this aesthetic. There are clear echoes of Wordsworth's spots of time in Owenson's recollections:

In days of childhood, in the happy recess of school-holidays, I have caught a distant view of Sligo Abbey, in a moment of such felicity as childhood only experiences, "when we feel that we are happier than we know." An idea of its venerable ruins had insensibly associated itself with the remembrance of the lively susceptibility I then possessed, to every impression; and that idea still preserving its ascendancy in my mind, rendered the object that gave rise to it, an object of peculiar interest, and ardent curiosity. I have always loved those scenes which connect the pleasures of the intellect with those of sense, which are equally dear to reflection and to fancy, over which the mental sympathies extend themselves, and where the heart and the eye repose with equal satisfaction and delight. (qtd. in Fitzpatrick 33)

Owenson's "distant view" of the "venerable ruins" stays in her mind, and she is able to recall the pleasure she felt as a child. But as I will discuss later in the chapter, the

picturesque is inherently economic and hierarchical besides turning nature into a kind of painting for the viewer's pleasure. The aesthetic pleasure found in the picturesque is supposed to signal a higher consciousness but is undermined by the resistance to see the political.

Just as Owenson's personal hybrid identity was often problematic, the hybrid narrative voice and textual structure of *The Wild Irish Girl* also invokes some problems in regards to how the audience is supposed to read the text. As a female novelist who is both Irish and English, Owenson creates an English male protagonist who writes letters to his male friend (also English) about Ireland and the Irish Glorvina. So the text represents a female describing the male gaze directed at a female who then looks back, blending both feminine and masculine visualities, the patriarchal power of Horatio and the challenge represented by Glorvina. Likewise, Owenson is presenting a form of mimicry wherein there is a double vision disrupting not just patriarchal control but colonial control as well. Owenson's own Irish Anglicanism and her hyperbolic display of Irishness is the first layer, but then she portrays her English character Horatio in such a way that he represents the cultural and racial prejudices inherent in colonizing authority. She then has the Irish Glorvina, similar to the earlier weavers, look back at Horatio with a "gaze of otherness" (Bhabha 126), thus threatening the "civilizing mission" of colonialism and its representation of wholeness with her partial presence.

Moreover, the epistolary form of the novel only accounts for half of the actual text. When the reader opens the novel, he or she sees the fictional letters on the top portion of the page, while on the bottom of the page are extensive non-fictional footnotes about the history of Ireland. Ina Ferris declares "The passage between genres is both

constant and awkward, neither a smooth integration nor a clear demarcation” (Ferris, “Writing” 95). She goes on to say the two parts of the text have permeable boundaries, “The gap between the two texts, then, turns out to be less a barrier than a border crossing, as genres migrate back and forth and spill over into one another” (Ferris, “Writing” 96). Thus, the reader sees the combination and contradictions of the fused text set before them on the page and in the changing narrative. This rejection of boundaries then serves to prepare the reader to give up conceptual boundaries about gender and nation in regards to the characters.

A further blurring of gendered narrative voice and textual structure is the fact that Owenson takes from multiple genres (national tale, romance, travel narrative, ethnography, gothic, etc) and uses a variety of languages and dialects (English, French, Irish, Latin). Within the overall romance plot, she incorporates politics and classical references not usually expected or accepted in women’s writing, thereby further hybridizing the text and challenging traditional gender roles. The historical context of the novel situates it squarely between the Act of Union (1800), which brought Ireland under British governmental control, and Waterloo (1815), a crucial defeat of the French army by the British. But while the author’s editorial notes are contemporary to the publication date of 1806, the novel takes place pre-Union. This leaves the reader with a kind of split screen, experiencing the fantasy of the past with the reality of the present. I suggest that this allows Owenson to point out errors made in the past at the same time she complicates the current cultural situation.

Owenson’s unusual text prepares her audience to see the cracks in the British imperial and patriarchal control of Ireland and its people, and she uses the disrupting

power of the look to do it. By including moments in her narrative where there is a possibility for a visual exchange, a reciprocity between the British man and Irish woman, she suggests that a more equal union between nations and genders would be good for all. A visual exchange is incredibly difficult to achieve, let alone sustain, however. When I discuss a visual exchange, I mean when two disparate characters/people (usually an imperial, white male and a colonial subordinate other) look at one another at the same time and accept the other as a subject. Only as subjects can they be capable of a look of their own rather than simply being the object of a gaze. Usually this exchange/process begins with the imperial subject expressing some sort of interest in or desire to know the other, but preconceived cultural prejudices prevent the assumption of equality. It is only after the dominant character is threatened with an objectifying gaze in return that there is a possibility for a balance in the power dynamics. The possibility of these reciprocal visual exchanges, I argue, suggests a hope for the future even if it cannot be sustained for more than a brief amount of time in the present.

As discussed in the Introduction, Edward Said and other postcolonial scholars have suggested that knowledge of the people being colonized can assist imperialists in their subjugation of these non-white, non-Europeans. While this is no doubt true in many cases,²⁷ Said does not seem to address the fact that progress can be made without knowledge. Without curiosity or a desire to interact with those who are different in terms of nationality or gender, there is no possibility of moving forward at all. Upon his arrival in Ireland, for example, Horatio immediately shows interest and curiosity towards the land and its people, but he must struggle against learned prejudices towards the Irish as

²⁷ In fact, most of the people in the dominant viewer position in the texts I examine do indeed represent colonial oppressors who use their gaze to their advantage.

other, which prevent him from fully accepting a visual exchange with Glorvina until the end of the novel.

As I will show in the next chapter, Mary Prince's blackness is what immediately identifies her as different from the white British. While the Irish may not be subject to the same kind of immediate visual marker, the English often viewed the Irish as another race, Celtic rather than Anglo-Saxon.²⁸ In addition, although it was not until later in the century (1840s) that the Irish were more distinctly linked with blackness, there were often illustrative and descriptive examples pointing to Irish inferiority and difference. Michael De Nie explains that "discourses that portrayed the Irish as the 'Celtic fringe,' the cultural and racial Other, have existed since the Normans first invaded in the twelfth century," including works by Gerald of Wales "who described the Irish as barbarous murderers and thieves" (5). In his book, *The Eternal Paddy*, De Nie discusses how the British press responded in similar ways to the uprisings in Ireland in 1798 and the Union two years after. He points out the ways in which the Irish were often associated with French revolutionaries,²⁹ who themselves were caricatured in the British press as cannibals with stereotypical African features. James Gillray was one of the artists who portrayed both the French and the Irish with sunken eyes and thrusting jaws and lips. Figure 1.1 illustrates the "protosimian" features characterizing the Irish rebels, who are identified as Irish by the shamrock on their hats. Their association with the French automatically indicates their violent and passionate temperament. The lack of shoes on the figure holding the shoulder cannon further signals their uncivilized nature. But the fact that the

²⁸ See Ann McClintock's *Imperial Leather*.

²⁹ The Irish rebels did in fact make an alliance with France, and French troops landed on Irish soil in 1798. But they arrived two months too late, and their defeat by British troops signaled the end of the uprisings (for a while).

cannon is dribbling the ammunition balls is the more obvious indication of Irish ineffectuality or military weakness. In addition, it is impossible not to associate the very phallic image with the Irishman's implied ineffectual sexuality, which is in contrast to Africans, who were considered hypersexual, and the reality of the many children in Irish families.



Figure 1.1: “United Irishmen in Training” (1798) by James Gillray. Reprinted in L.

Perry Curtis, Jr.’s *Apes and Angels*

In fact, L. Perry Curtis recognizes Gillray’s images as one of the origins of the monstrous black Irishman of the Victorian period. But the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were definitely still/already associating the Irish with the exotic and the barbarous. De Nie quotes from a 1799 issue of the *Kentish Gazette*, “The state of this country is every day becoming more wretchedly deplorable: it seems rather to be

inhabited by hordes of plundering Arabs than a people of civilized Europe, and the traveler proceeds not on his way here with less cautious terror, nor is less exposed to danger, than if he were traversing the forests or deserts of the eastern world” (69). The references to Ireland as inspiring terror and being similar to the unexplored and dangerous places of the East, places Ireland in a category with other British colonial spaces that needed to be civilized and tamed. And this is the exact sense with which Horatio first approaches Ireland, “almost assign[ing] to these rude people scenes appropriately barbarous” (13). He even admits that a travel narrative is what led to his “confirmed prejudice” of “Irish ferocity” (13).

Horatio’s image of the Irish as uncivilized and capable of broiling an enemy does not seem so far fetched when considering that the violence that occurred during the 1798 rebellion encouraged the British press to juxtapose the “civilized, magnanimous behavior of the British” with the savagery of the Irish (De Nie 66). Similar to the Gillray image, in *Letters on the Irish Nation. Written During a Visit to that Kingdom, in the Autumn of the Year 1799*, George Cooper described the Irish as “‘illiterate and uncivilized people,’ who ‘approximate to the degraded state of a horde of Hottentots,’ are ‘hasty and impetuous, rash and choleric, and subject to the most violent attacks of anger and passion’” (qtd. in Kroeg 234). In Cooper’s description, not only are the Irish violent but they are also equivalent to “Hottentots,” a term originally used to describe a tribe of people in South Africa. Yet in the eighteenth century, “Hottentot” came to denote “a person of inferior intellect or culture; an uncivilized or ignorant person (*OED*).³⁰ We will see in Chapter 2

³⁰ Early visitors to the Cape renamed the Khoekhoe people as Hottentots. While the term is now considered archaic and offensive, South Africans were still using it in the late nineteenth century when Olive Schreiner wrote her novel. See Chapter 4.

how this appellation continues to convey derogatory stereotypes of black men and women. In using this term for the Irish, Cooper is reinforcing the Irish people's inferiority, but he is also racializing them in ways similar to Gillray's illustrations.

In addition to equating the Irish with different forms of savagery and Orientalist images, more often than not racializing them, the British also perpetuated a contradictory stereotype of the Irish Paddy, the brash, entertaining fool. This caricature showed up repeatedly in the theater, which Michael Ragussis describes as an "ethnic spectacle" in which the audience was given "visual and aural cues of ethnic identity" (778). The Irish brogue and effusive gestures played up by the actors signaled Irishmen as being "simple and comical" (Ragussis). Sydney Owenson would have been intimately conscious of the stereotypes the British had of the Irishman, because her own father played the blundering stereotype on the stage. And her own performance of Irish identity (by taking on the role of the wild Irish girl) implies Owenson's awareness of her audience as well as her potential manipulations of the stereotypes. She wanted to encourage the desire and curiosity of her readers to get to know the Irish, and she uses various tropes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to do that, including the picturesque.

Immediately within the text, Horatio is set up as the foreign traveler observing the native landscape and peoples. His picturesque descriptions and thoughts are revealed to the reader through letters he writes to his friend back in England. The reason he is in Ireland in the first place is because his father sent him there as a punishment. So he arrives in Ireland with various derogatory stereotypes, which are almost immediately challenged by the beauty of the place and the friendliness of the people. But while his prejudices are being exposed as false, he retains the superiority of the British male

observer and the power inherent in binaries like subject/object, colonizer/colonized, primary/other, painter/painted. Even after praising Dublin, Horatio's conclusion that it is a copy of London—"the city appears to me to be the miniature copy of our imperial original" (Owenson 15-16)—points to his ingrained ideas of superiority. At the same time, he also signals an awareness of England as an imperial state with power over its colonies. Leitch Ritchie, in his 1837 book *Ireland: Picturesque and Romantic*, seems to mimic Horatio's initial sight of the Bay of Dublin when he writes, "This was my first approach to Ireland by the Bay of Dublin; and after having explored a considerable portion of continental Europe in search of the picturesque, I certainly did not expect to find at home a scene of such splendid beauty on so great a scale" (Ritchie 2-3). The surprise that both men, fictional and real, display in reaction to their first encounter with Ireland represents the ingrained prejudices against the Irish and Ireland that the British felt, at the same time that they comment on how erroneous those prejudices are. Likewise, Ritchie's reference to the Irish scene being "at home" reinforces the idea that Ireland was a colony close enough to England that it could be considered a natural (lesser) extension of England. But the use of the picturesque in their descriptions always already implies a power imbalance wherein the observer is in the privileged position.

One way that the imperial male observer demonstrated his power and position above that of what he was observing was by aestheticizing it—viewing and analyzing it like a painting. In discussing Victorian travel writing, Mary Pratt says in her book *Imperial Eyes* that writers "opted for a brand of verbal painting whose highest calling was to produce for the home audience the peak moments at which geographical 'discoveries' were 'won' for England" (201)—what Pratt calls the "monarch-of-all-I-survey" (197).

Moreover, she explains that “the viewer-painting relation also implies that [the viewer] has the power if not to possess, at least to evaluate the scene” (Pratt 205). Not only are the beautiful or sublime aspects recorded for the readers (in the sense of the value they are gaining) but also the deficiencies, which Pratt says implies a need for intervention. Throughout his letters, Horatio uses visual terms to describe Ireland and its people. For example, he “perceived,” “observed,” “examined,” “gazed,” and “glanced,” among many others, but he also moves beyond visual language to that of the artist or aesthete. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, Horatio casts his eye over the landscape and acknowledges its sublimity while at the same time reverting to ideas of the picturesque by subtly complaining that the utility of the land (agriculture) is not so pleasing to the eye: “The liberality of nature appears to me to be here but frugally assisted by the donations of art. Here agriculture appears in the least felicitous of her aspects ... while the unvaried surface of the perpetual pasturage which satisfies the eye of the interested grazier, disappoints the glance of the tasteful spectator” (Owenson 18-19).

Such ideas could only belong to someone who does not rely on that agriculture to live. So Horatio reveals his upper-class position but also transforms the Irish landscape into a mere painting, which could be better, for a “tasteful spectator”—thereby occluding the real people who live and use that land. Horatio’s neglect of/blindness to the real people who depend on the land implies his desire to maintain that distance inherent in the picturesque aesthetic. Similarly, when Horatio first sees the Castle of Inismore, he frames it like a picture:

Towards the extreme western point of this peninsula, which was wildly romantic beyond all description, arose a vast and grotesque pile of rocks, which at once

formed the scite and fortifications of the noblest mass of ruins on which my eye ever rested. Grand even in desolation, and magnificent in decay—it was the Castle of Inismore. The setting sun shone brightly on its mouldering turrets, and the waves which bathed its rocky basis, reflected on their swelling bosoms the dark outlines of its awful ruins. (Owenson 44-45)

Not only does Horatio describe his view of the castle in picturesque terms, but he also ennoble the ruined castle. During this time, it was popular for the rich to construct faux ruins on their property. Horatio almost seems to be viewing the ruined castle in the same way he would especially good ruins at a friend's estate. The castle is just that much more romantic for being real. As with his evaluation of the agricultural land, he does not take into consideration the prosaic discomfort of living in a drafty ruined castle or the unhappy history that made it ruins (or if he does it just makes it more romantic, not representative of imperial subjugation).

The picturesque beauty and sublimity of the landscape and culture directly connects to writers like Edmund Burke and William Gilpin, who helped eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers define and describe the visual landscape. Horatio continually uses their terms (and related feelings) to describe what he observes. For instance, as Horatio walks and observes the Irish landscape on his way to Bally---, he is “interrupted by pauses of curiosity and admiration” as well as “a tranquility tinged with terror, a sort of ‘delightful terror’”(Owenson 19). Horatio's feelings of terror in the face of the sublime landscape connect to Burke's idea that the sublime is whatever is terrible³¹ in regards to

³¹ Edmund Burke describes, “whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible

sight, and it also suspends reason while the mind is entirely filled with the object. Yet the sublime object is also always at an aesthetic distance, implying the viewer's inherent safety. While Horatio is able to keep the sublime at a distance, he feels a "delightful terror." However, when the sublime object (Glorvina) refuses to be domesticated by the viewer, Horatio himself must submit. The return of the counter gaze, such as that by the Medusa figure Glorvina, which will be discussed later in the chapter, threatens to subvert the aesthetic pleasure and distance Horatio is using as an artist.³² The fact that his aesthetic judgment can be threatened by gendered and colonial gazes reinforces the idea that the picturesque frame Horatio is using is inherently tainted by prejudice and socially constructed biases.

Along with Edmund Burke, Joshua Reynolds and William Gilpin also privilege the prospect view, or as Pratt described it, "the monarch-of-all-I-survey." Gilpin's *Three Essays* (1792) locates the picturesque between the sublime and the beautiful and directly connects it with visual framing, viewing nature as if it were a painting. He specifically delineates roughness, variety, and contrast to be qualities of picturesque beauty; meanwhile, the main source of amusement for the picturesque traveler is "the pursuit of his object," which definitely has imperial and gender implications. Jacqueline Labbe, in *Romantic Visualities*, focuses on the prospect view and the metaphor it represents for gendered power. She examines what Foucault does not consider in his work on power and vision; she argues that the proprietary eye (looking out and staking a claim on the

objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (36).

³² Horatio, as the powerful subject, could ignore the returned look of the object, but he is too curious about Glorvina to do so. As a result, his curiosity and desire to know more about Glorvina (and Ireland) open him up to the threat of the return look.

view) excludes women who must look and act more indirectly and unobtrusively. In addition, along with gender, the inherently economic and class issues embedded in the prospect gaze really privileges those who can “ascend eminences,” which would be more difficult for women and lower classes.

Owenson is able to effectively point out the ways in which Horatio’s artistic gaze is problematized by gender, empire, and class because she is so well versed in the language of the picturesque herself.³³ Owenson published *Patriotic Sketches* a short year after *The Wild Irish Girl*, and she demonstrates her knowledge of and immersion within the picturesque. She describes a visit to Sligo:

The scenery which environs the town . . . is bold, irregular, and picturesque: and though despoiled of those luxurious woods which once (in common with the rest of the Island) enriched its aspect, it still preserves many of those traits which constitute the perfection of landscape, hanging over a beautiful bay formed by the influx of the ‘Steep Atlantic,’ sheltered by lofty mountains, and reposing almost at the brow of a hill along whose base the River Gitley steals its devious way. The high road by which it is approached for the last twenty miles, winds through a scene of romantic variety, which frequently combines the most cultivated and harmonious traits, with the wildest and most abrupt images of scenic beauty. The groves, the lakes, the enchanting islands, and all the glowing charms of an Italian

³³ Owenson’s ability to appropriate the picturesque for her own descriptive purposes suggests that Labbe’s position on gender and the picturesque, while certainly important and true in most cases, is perhaps limited. Owenson and other Romantic women writers, such as Charlotte Smith, challenged the idea that women were unaware of the power of aesthetic discourse and the prospect view.

scenery which diffuses itself over the picturesque and cultivated scenes of Florence-court, are suddenly replaced by a dreary heath, and a bold and continued mass of rocks, through which nature, time, and art, seem to have cut a deep and narrow defile which, entered at that hour sacred to the somber grandeur of the true sublime, awakens in the heart of the traveler such a warning as the entrance to Dante's *Inferno* holds out" (qtd. in Fitzpatrick 32).

Owenson's account of her experience definitely fits Gilpin's definition of picturesque beauty as comprising roughness, variety, and contrast. The "irregular" scenery represented by various juxtapositions, the bay versus the mountains and the cultivated versus the wild, all point to the variety and contrast Gilpin favors. Moreover, the reference to Italian landscape and Florence implies the cultural capital of a painting viewed in a museum. However, Owenson also subtly hints at the gaps in a picturesque aesthetic. For example, her reference to the despoiling of woods points to the cultivation of the land by people for their own purposes, a prosaic fact that the picturesque usually ignores.³⁴

Ron Broglio asserts that the defining quality of the picturesque, "that nature could be rendered as a visual scene and the scene transcribed into a pleasing picture," represents both power and its problems with representation. He continues, "The demands of representation arrest movement by the tourist, the artist, and even nature" (18). In addition, Broglio implies that the picturesque, which equates to "visual possession at a

³⁴ In the eighteenth century, shipbuilding resulted in the exploitation of woodlands throughout Europe, and demand often outpaced supply. The political implications of England's despoiling woods for commercial and military purposes adds another layer to Owenson's description.

distance,” is dialectically opposed to “proximity, contact, and exchange” (21). He also argues that because “sight allows possession of an object at a distance,” it means the boundaries between the viewing subject and the object viewed are maintained (27). Owenson’s use of the aesthetic language made popular by Gilpin and the others points to her acceptance of the implied gender and class hierarchies, but the attempt at visual exchanges in the novel seem to contest these same hierarchies in subtle ways. In *Wordsworth’s Vagrant Muse*, Gary Harrison discusses how the insertion of the body within the picturesque challenges the traditional distance between the observer and the objects he encounters. Broglio references Harrison when he then explains, “in contrast to visual possession at a distance, a phenomenological approach which includes proximity, contact, and exchange offers other means of dwelling within landscapes” (21). By explicitly showing how her protagonist attempts to resist the subjectivity of the other by keeping her at a distance, by continually turning Ireland and its people into a picturesque painting, Owenson makes her audience aware of the problems of representation, whether she is consciously aware of it or not.

Horatio does not limit his aesthetic gaze to the landscape but also views the culture as a painting. For example, he condescendingly views the Irish Catholic religion in descriptive visual terms, “What a captivating, what a picturesque faith! Who would not become its proselyte, were it not for the stern opposition of reason” (Owenson 50). Again, his praise is qualified for while he is admiring its visual attractiveness, he is claiming no one with reason would subscribe to Catholicism. And by referring to it as picturesque, Horatio is also implying his distance from it. Susan Egenolf argues that Horatio’s description “neutraliz[es] any real power that the faith might have” (113). In

addition, when he sees for the first time the Prince, Princess, Father John, and their domestics and vassals who love them, he exclaims “What a picture!” (Owenson 50). And Horatio’s guide makes sure that he gets “a good view of the Prince.” He writes to his friend, “Behold me then mingling among a group of peasantry, and, like them, straining my eyes to that magnet which fascinated every glance” (Owenson 46). Even though he joins in the actions of the peasants and the desire to see this famous family, he makes a joke out of it by pointing it out to his friend. He retains his superiority and distance by judging it as a spectacle, as “strikingly picturesque” (Owenson 46).

In “Displaying Ireland: Sydney Owenson and the Politics of Spectacular Antiquarianism,” Natasha Tessone analyzes *The Wild Irish Girl* and vision in the context of museums and other public displays. She claims, “the ethnographic display used by Owenson as a political tool for representing and promoting Irish culture, seems to capitalize exactly on the fantasy of proprietorship it stimulates in the viewer” (176). In addition, “In displaying Ireland before English audiences, Owenson undoubtedly gratified the English spectator’s desire for close visual observation of exotic societies” (Tessone 185). Yet in her repeated use of visual language and Horatio’s own awareness of his artistic framing, Owenson was not just playing into the imperialist culture of “proprietorship” but pointing it out – making it visible to her audience, so to speak. By revealing the way Horatio, and by extension, other British male travelers framed other cultures, Owenson is also revealing the artificiality of the power constructs that control both imperialism and gender.

Later in the novel, Horatio actually does paint a picture of Glorvina in an attempt to show his love, but at the same time, by making her the object of his painting he

attempts to metaphorically possess her. But he does not have complete power in this scene as he desires/needs a response from Glorvina in return. He says, “For the world I would not have looked her full in the face; but from beneath my downcast eye I stole a transient glance” (Owenson 100). He wants her to show her love, too, but he appears afraid of a straight look. His desire for Glorvina pushes him to desire some sort of interaction, but he is afraid of losing his position of power; in fact, it seems as if he has already lost it to some extent since he is even afraid to look *at* her.

In his theories of vision and power, Michel Foucault claims that the one looking (the guard in the tower of the panopticon) has the power. Part of that power relies on the fact that the guard can see the prisoners but the prisoners cannot see him. Horatio’s attempts to occupy the prospect view and to turn Ireland and its people into a static picturesque painting hints at his awareness of the power vision can hold. Throughout the novel, he tries to maintain his position as viewer from a position of invisibility, which allows him to maintain a distance and not necessarily interact with others. Early on, he avoids the local Irish gentry in the neighborhood of his father’s estate, stating he has not been “visible to the visitants” and “persists in [his] invisibility” despite his boredom (Owenson 33, 35). This relative anonymity allows him to make his clandestine visits to and from Inismore, and he had “no apprehension of discovery” or reports being made to his father (Owenson 55, 133).³⁵ Once at Inismore, Horatio manages to hide behind a false

³⁵ Horatio was sent alone to Ireland as a punishment. While there, he was supposed to be spending his time studying legal texts with the understanding that he would seek a position in law or government when he was allowed to return to England. Horatio, of course, did not follow these instructions and instead explored the local landscape and nearby villages. It is on one of these exploratory trips that he encounters the Prince and Glorvina; Horatio does not want his father to find out about his visits there, because he is afraid his father will forbid them.

identity as well, effectively concealing his true self. Horatio often uses his invisibility, or more accurately seeks out a kind of invisibility, in order to spy on Glorvina.

While voyeurism as a term did not come into use until the twentieth century, “peeping Tom” was being used as early as 1796 when it shows up in *Grose’s Classical Dictionary Vulgar Tongue* as meaning “a nick name for a curious, prying fellow” (OED). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as, “A person who watches or spies on others, esp. pruriently,” and Horatio definitely fits this characterization. Other scholars, such as Joseph Lew, have described Horatio’s position as peeping Tom as taking “advantage of his ambivalently dependent yet powerful position to spy, voyeuristically, upon his pupil” (54). Obviously, there are clear similarities between a peeping Tom and a voyeur, who is sexually stimulated by observing the sexual organs or activities of others, and Freud’s scopophilia, which is pleasure in looking. In her foundational essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Laura Mulvey uses psychoanalysis to examine the systemic strategies of representation present in film, in particular the representations of women. She focuses on the ways in which women become the pleasurable object of the male gaze, both within the film and outside of it. While her argument is limited in that she does not allow for a female viewer and she does not challenge psychoanalysis, her discussion of scopophilia and voyeurism is relevant to Horatio and his secret gaze in many ways.

Mulvey describes the way Freud associates scopophilia with subjecting other people to a controlling and curious gaze by turning them into objects. Freud says that taking this to the extreme can cause perverse voyeurism. And yet Mulvey also argues that mainstream film plays on voyeuristic fantasy through the distance created between screen image and the audience, not to mention the darkened theater. Mulvey describes women

becoming aware of their role as erotic object and spectacle on display, which is very similar to John Berger's description of women as being constantly aware of being looked at and the interiorization of that idea in her construction of self (46-7). Yet for Mulvey and psychoanalysts, there is always already an underlying threat beneath the woman as passive object of the male gaze, castration anxiety on the part of males. While I am skeptical of the ways Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis relies so much on fears of castration, I cannot help but see signs of this in Horatio's later reaction to the female look and his association of this look with Medusa. Mulvey maintains that one way to disarm the threat is through a form of voyeurism involving "investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery." The other way is to substitute the desired woman with a fetish or to turn the woman herself into a fetishistic object.

After the religious service is over when Horatio first glimpses the family of Inismore, Horatio is terrified when he loses sight of the Prince and Princess and casts his eyes around until he sees a light on in the castle. When he hears Glorvina singing, he climbs the ruins of a parapet wall so that when standing on it he has "a perfect view of the interior of that apartment" which the Prince and his family inhabit (Owenson 52). In watching Glorvina play the harp, he exclaims, "Oh! Could I but seize the touching features—could I but realize the vivid tints of this enchanting picture" (Owenson 53). Horatio's desire to get a closer, more in depth view of these exotic objects turn him into a voyeur, a peeping tom. Horatio also more clearly articulates the connection between painting and possession by turning Glorvina into a static picture and saying he wished he could "seize" her and presumably own her. Bridget Matthews-Kane explains, "His resulting voyeurism, which leads him to violate the sanctity of the family home, allows

him to spy on the group without the worry of his look being reciprocated” (11). Horatio observes the family as if they were the subjects of a painting (actually framed by the window), which fits Gilpin’s description of the picturesque. By transforming humans into a painting, however, he strips them of subjectivity. But he is also looking on the family with great curiosity and a desire to know them, which could just be another power play by the colonizer but I argue can suggest a corresponding desire for interaction and exchange.

Meanwhile “entranced in breathless observation,” Horatio falls and knocks himself unconscious, an act that ironically renders him powerless and subject to the actions of the family. As he ensconces himself in the castle, lying and hiding his identity by claiming to be a wandering artist, Horatio falls in love with the beautiful Glorvina and “gazed earnestly” at her, both directly and in stolen glances. He also continues to observe her in a voyeuristic manner. For instance, he repeatedly watches her bedroom window for indications that she is there. He admits he has “often watched that little casement” (Owenson 122), and before he leaves Inismore, he “rode twice round that wing of the castle where Glorvina sleeps: the curtain of her bed-room casement was closely drawn; but as I passed by it the second time, I thought I perceived a shadowy form at the window of the adjoining casement” (Owenson 124). When he is again leaving Inismore, as he thinks forever, he returns at night and wanders around outside the castle to watch the light in Glorvina’s window (Owenson 223). But Owenson is not just emphasizing Horatio’s voyeuristic pleasures she is also putting her audience in a similar position. As Natasha Tessone claims, “the novel is framed to accommodate the gaze of trained English museum-goers, allowing them to satiate vicariously their voyeuristic appetites through

Horatio's visual imagination. To his vicarious 'tasteful spectator' Horatio opens up a 'new region of wonders,' a pictorial Ireland in which he encounters, as it were, one landscape painting after another, until readers, like Horatio himself, are 'entranced in breathless observation'" (179).

Horatio continues his peeping tom activities by examining Glorvina's boudoir without her knowledge in order to gratify his curiosity, "unseen . . . [he] stole to the asylum of her pensive thoughts" (Owenson 156). He does this not once but several times as he has "often stolen thither when [he] knew her elsewhere engaged" (170). Glorvina's boudoir is represented as both her private physical space and psychological retreat, which positions Horatio as a clandestine spy who violates her body and mind. Even when she enters, he stands "concealed by the silken drapery" so he can watch her even though "she did not perceive" him (Owenson 157). Once inside her boudoir, he is "struck by the incongruity of its appearance," a mix of old and new, with a Turkey carpet, antique vases, books, and London newspapers. In fact, her boudoir seems to exemplify Glorvina's "hybrid otherness."³⁶ Glorvina embodies several contradictions: culture and nature, naïve and sentimental, and sublime and beautiful. She is highly educated but is continually described as having natural talents, seemingly contrasting Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas of female education with those of Rousseau.³⁷ In addition, she is both exemplary of feminine beauty and inspires terror in Horatio. Glorvina also represents Ireland as an independent nationality but also as a hybrid culture resulting from empire. These

³⁶ The descriptive term comes from page 35 of Heather Braun's essay "The Seductive Masquerade of *The Wild Irish Girl*: Disguising Political Fear in Sydney Owenson's National Tale."

³⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft said women should be taught to reason and think for themselves, while Rousseau idealized the child raised in nature away from society.

contradictions seem to be the very thing that attract Horatio but also disrupt his traditional role as subject/colonizer/gazer, because Glorvina's hybridity seems to empower her. Glorvina is situated here as a subject with an identity all her own that is significantly different than his, which prevents Horatio from keeping her in the object position. In addition, the fact that Glorvina is sometimes hidden from his voyeuristic gaze only further inflames him.

Several times in the novel, Horatio and his father are prevented from gazing on Glorvina because of her veils. His initial sight of the Prince and Princess of Inismore is hindered by Glorvina's veiled features, and in the infamous dream sequence Glorvina's veil is removed to reveal a Gorgon. Moreover, Horatio's later misconception of what Glorvina feels is exacerbated by his inability to make eye contact with her, "her veil was drawn over her eyes" (221). Similarly, Lord M--- claims that he did not realize Glorvina did not actually want to marry him because "her veil fell over her face - the index of her soul was concealed" (Owenson 249). The veils create confusion because Horatio and his father cannot read Glorvina without her communicating eyes. The veil does not impede Glorvina looking, however; the inability of Horatio and his father to determine where Glorvina is looking and the implication of her masked surveillance, much like the panoptical observer, further enhances their discomfort and feelings of ineffectiveness. Similarly, the veil can also be used as a kind of protective barrier from their penetrating gazes. In the end of the novel, at the climatic altar scene, Glorvina is wearing a long veil, presumably an impromptu wedding veil. When her father dies from the shocking

revelations of Horatio and his father,³⁸ Glorvina removes the veil and uses it to cover her father's corpse. Bridget Matthews-Kane has said, "the transformation of the wedding veil to a funeral shroud demonstrates that while Glorvina can perhaps cast off her otherness in her marriage to the Anglo-Irish, this simultaneously represents the death of her culture" (16). I find the shroud as a signal of death relevant in many ways, including the literal death of the Prince and the symbolic death of the glorious past he represented. But simply connecting the veil-shroud to death is insufficient. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, the shroud can also be used for protection. For Glorvina, she is stopping outsiders from gazing at her father and, symbolically, Ireland itself; yet, she is ultimately unsuccessful. Likewise, although Horatio closes his eyes in a childlike manner - "if I can't see you, you can't see me" - he is, of course, subject to the return gaze.

Horatio's learned prejudices and voyeuristic gaze cause him to resist the subjectivity of a people he has constructed as inferior to him. Several times in the novel, Horatio's fear of the other is epitomized in the Irish female Glorvina. The first instance is when he imagines Glorvina approaching his bed and pushing back her veil to reveal the face of a Gorgon. He immediately awakens to find her really in his room but beautiful instead of hideous. The fact that he dreams her to be a Gorgon is especially compelling as critics such as Teresa de Lauretis have analyzed how the figures of the Gorgons and Medusa have been used by different cultures. For instance, de Lauretis observes, "Medusa's power to cast the spell which in many cultures is actually called 'the evil eye,'

³⁸ This is the dramatic scene in which Horatio realizes Glorvina's mysterious suitor is his father, and his father realizes that Horatio and Glorvina have had a clandestine relationship and fallen in love. The Prince, who is already ill, is shocked into a heart attack by these (somewhat incestuous) revelations, not to mention that Horatio's father is the evil Englishman who previously took their land.

is directly represented in her horribly ‘staring eyes,’ which are a constant feature of her figurative and literary representations” (110). Moreover, she argues that the threat caused by the Gorgons is to man’s vision, which is linked to his powerful subjectivity. Horatio actually does use the phrase “evil eye” in reference to Glorvina, “What if this Glorvina has an evil eye, and have overlooked me? The witch haunts me, not only in my dreams, but when *I fancy myself*, at least, awake” (Owenson 133). Similarly, “Were I to personify the word *spell*, she would sit for the picture . . . A thousand times she swims before my sight, as I last beheld her; her locks of living gold parting on her brow of snow . . . at once so infantine and graceful” (Owenson 66). Horatio unwillingly gives Glorvina power by calling her a Gorgon and witch who casts spells on him. He even suggests his consciousness of being awake is threatened, hinting at a phenomenological crisis of identity. But of course, Gorgon and witch are both gendered terms in Horatio’s vocabulary, so the threat is doubly frightening when it is from a typically subjugated source—a woman. He sees her as someone who can overpower him with a spell; but at the same time, he objectifies her by making her the visual representation of “spell” in a picture, and defining her as “infantine.” His seeming automatic attempt to neutralize the threat Glorvina represents is recognizable in these visual descriptions.

In addition, Beth Newman proposes a Freudian understanding of the Gorgon’s visual power. She speculates,

Perhaps the sight that makes the Medusa threatening to the male spectator may be understood as the sight of someone else’s look—the knowledge that the other sees and therefore resists being reduced to an appropriable object. That is, Medusa

defies the male gaze as Western culture has constructed it: as the privilege of a male subject, a means of relegating women (or 'Woman') to the status of object (of representation, discourse, desire, etc.). (Newman 451)

Thus, she concludes, when the male loses control because of the woman's annihilating gaze, he is emasculated. This emasculation clearly reflects back to the scene with the female weavers where Horatio believes he has lost his dignity as a male because they gazed back at him. But Glorvina as Gorgon threatens not just Horatio's power as a male but also as imperial subject. Heather Braun explains that Horatio's "vision of Glorvina as a hideous monster beneath her veil is also a familiar Gothic trope with Oriental roots. It alludes not only to both ancient and modern myths but also speaks to the various threats that a coy, willfully seductive Glorvina poses to a seemingly stable English nation" (Braun 38). This seems especially true when considering moments when Horatio describes Glorvina's ambition in terms of empire by imagining that "sometimes sparkling in the haughtiness of her eye" she seems to assert, "I was born for empire!" (Owenson 87). Glorvina takes the traditionally male imperial position by claiming her potential for rule, but Horatio is just not ready to acknowledge the subjectivity that comes with that power. Of course, Glorvina's statement is ambiguous enough that it could also mean she was born to be colonized, emphasizing the two-way dynamic of empire. By invoking this form of double vision, Owenson disrupts the kind of one-way subjugating gaze of the colonial authority.

As I discussed in the introduction, bell hooks among others argue that colonial masters denied the look of the colonized, thereby keeping the power of the gaze firmly in

the eyes of the already dominant culture. In claiming a look of their own, subalterns assert their subjectivity and ability to participate in a community on equal footing with those in more dominant positions. Glorvina as the subordinate female and inferior Irish should not have had an eye of her own. In looking back, in returning Horatio's gaze, she threatens traditional power stratifications in regards to both gender and imperialism. As colonial other, like the black slaves and servants hooks discusses, she should not assert equality by seeming to observe her 'superiors.' Similarly, as female object, she should not disrupt the male-subject/female-object binary that gives men the power. Yet that is precisely what Glorvina does in looking back at Horatio. Several times Horatio describes how she looked "up full in my face" (Owenson 96), "raised her eyes to mine" (Owenson 121), and "her melting eyes met mine" (Owenson 159). In taking control of her look, Glorvina evinces some sort of power over others (particularly Horatio) just as white male colonists do. Glorvina does not just draw Horatio's gaze/look but also his devotion, "the delicious languor that mellowed the fire of her beamy glance—I gazed, and worshiped!" (Owenson 40). Glorvina is challenging the traditional patriarchal, colonial authority through her awareness of the power of the gaze/look and her subsequent use of it.

Horatio's worship of Glorvina shows how Glorvina's power manifests in ways beyond just his initial terror. Often Horatio describes Glorvina's loving looks as "soul dissolving," "seducing," and "soul beaming" (Owenson 61, 165, 151), suggesting that Glorvina is taking Horatio's soul at the same time he is so caught up in her that he is ambivalent as to whether she takes it or not. In fact, as Burke says of the sublime, Horatio's whole mind is full of his object, Glorvina; "In the universe I saw nothing but Glorvina" (Owenson 222). In some ways, Horatio becomes subject to her will; he

explains, “While the eyes of Glorvina echoed her father’s commands [to return . . .] mine looked implicit obedience” (Owenson 163). Of course, her will corresponds with his desire, but he is still willing to use language such as “obedience.” Heather Braun points out that Horatio is aware of his changing power position, and Horatio’s “fascination with Glorvina spawns an undeniable submission that he can neither name nor resist; he can, however, regard the noticeable effects of this power reversal on Glorvina: ‘She now feels her power over me (with woman’s intuition, where the heart is in question!); and this consciousness gives to her manners a certain roguish tyranny, that renders her the most charming tantalizing being in the world” (Braun 34).

Yet, despite Horatio’s seeming enslavement to Glorvina (and in some ways Ireland), Glorvina’s eyes do not just look or dominate, they communicate. As John Berger states in the epigraph to this chapter, “the reciprocal nature of vision is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue” (9). The looks exchanged between Glorvina and Horatio are repeatedly described as “eloquent.” It is this exchange of looks, this looking and receiving a look in return, that indicates not just a reversal but also a reciprocity. It took Horatio’s terror to break down existing binaries, thus allowing the language of love (of soul) to finish the job: “We were running through all [love’s] moods and tenses with our eyes and looks” (Owenson 162). Horatio is able to accept Glorvina’s power in these instances, which allows them to occupy equal positions. Horatio realizes new aspects of himself through loving Glorvina: “the sparkling fluid of her eyes, turned on mine in almost dying softness, beamed on the latent powers of my once-chilled heart, and awakened there a thousand delicious transports” (Owenson 141). Glorvina transforms Horatio from the dominant imperial male observer to a part in a

communication of looks: “As it is, I feel a certain commerce of the soul—a mutual intelligence of mind and feeling with her, which a look, a sigh, a word is sufficient to betray—a sacred communion of spirit . . . ; and though we had been known to each other by looks only, still would this amalgamation of soul have existed” (Owenson 83). The dynamic exchange of looks allows both Horatio and Glorvina to occupy subject positions and to communicate on more equal ground; no longer is Horatio representing patriarchal imperial control over the objectified Glorvina. Her look back and his acceptance of that look have disrupted the traditional power binaries.

The conflation of Horatio’s and Glorvina’s looks is further emphasized in the concluding section of the novel. The novel turns from Horatio’s letters to a third person narrator for the dramatic conclusion. All the characters discover confusion and hidden identities, but Horatio and Glorvina are portrayed as similar figures with “wild eyes.” They reveal their emotional (almost hysterical) reactions and they both fall seemingly dead at the feet of their fathers. Therefore, in these last scenes Horatio and Glorvina form a kind of hybrid being—both male and female, English and Irish. This idea is further reinforced by Lord M---’s letter to Horatio about his marriage to Glorvina, which says “In this the dearest, most sacred, and most lasting of all human ties, let the names of Inismore and M--- be inseparably blended, and the distinctions of English and Irish, of Protestant and Catholic, for ever buried” (Owenson 250). By democratizing visibility in some ways, Owenson does not just encourage reciprocity but suggests a hope for a world where Irish and British are more equal. Likewise, because the blending is through the institution of marriage, it also suggests a hope for more equality among men and women.

Modern scholars have generated much discussion surrounding this conclusion. During the years before and after the Act of Union, many writers and artists used the metaphor of marriage to describe the union between Ireland and England. As Susan Kroeg says, the metaphor “stressed the potential for a contractual and therefore more reciprocal (albeit hierarchical) partnership” (221). But recent scholarship has been divided on whether this happily-ever-after marriage represents a true union or instead hints at a subtle violence and forced assimilation.³⁹ And I agree that the reality of their marriage means “Glorvina and Horatio must live a hyphenated (Anglo-Irish) identity, with homes in both lands” (Nagle 51). But I also would argue that Owenson is suggesting that the union will make them the characters better members of the Irish, and global, community. Lord M--- urges Horatio to “openly appear in the midst of his Irish peasantry” (Owenson 250), which contrasts with Horatio’s previous attempts at invisibility. By making himself visible to the native Irish, he is therefore accepting their looks and willing to interact with them. But, of course, there are still complications because of class issues; consider the possessive thrust of “*his* Irish peasantry.” Moreover, Susan Kroeg points out that as a daughter, Glorvina plays an important role in transferring power and property between her father and her suitor (224). The inevitable

³⁹ J. Th. Leerssen sees the marriage as a happy fusion of Gaelic exoticism and nationalism, while Lisa L. Moore reads the marriage as supporting the political union, wherein the marriage’s offspring will be hybrid Anglo-Irish citizens, both pro-Irish and pro-colonial. Julie Donovan and Frances R. Botkin see Owenson as performing a subtle cultural resistance despite the marriage. And Susan Egenolf suggests that the “domestic stability” of the marriage union does not quite fit the iconography of the wild and picturesque Ireland. Erik Simpson reads the concluding marriage as a fantasy, as something that can only happen in the time before the Union and its violence.

economic implications of an exchange, especially one that involves marriage, between a man and woman prevents the kind of equality defined by modern readers.⁴⁰

And yet in the novel the final union and exchange can only occur after Horatio accepts Glorvina's look and power AND her individuality and subjectivity. I have already suggested the ways in which Glorvina and Horatio end up communicating through reciprocal looks, but Horatio's acceptance of Glorvina's look relies heavily on his love for her. It is not until after he realizes she had a life before his arrival, including a relationship with his own father, that he can finally *see* her as a human operating on her own. Not long before the conclusion of the novel (when the narrator takes over), Horatio describes his last interaction with Glorvina:

I became motionless; the door opened, and the priest appeared leading in Glorvina. God of Heaven! The priest supported her on his arm, her veil was drawn over her eyes; I could not advance to meet them, I stood spell bound, — they both approached; I had not the power even to raise my eyes . . . The veil fell from her face. God of heaven, what a countenance! In the universe I saw nothing of Glorvina; such as I had once believed her, my own, my loving and beloved Glorvina, my tender friend, and impassioned mistress . . . The heart of Glorvina throbbed to mine, our tears flowed together, our sighs mingled.” (Owenson 222)

⁴⁰ Under the law of coverture a woman loses most legal rights to her fortune, she and her husband become one under British law - where the one is the husband. And if Glorvina represents Ireland in this marriage, then Ireland will lose its rights to England.

Obviously, much of this description can be attributed to the typical hyperbolic language spouted by lovers. However, as I have already discussed, the suggestion of magic signals Glorvina's potential power and Horatio's fear. Likewise, the veil is a barrier Glorvina can utilize to her own advantage. These implications of a disruption of the traditional power hierarchy are important. But it is what happens when Glorvina removes her veil that points towards a real change and not just a temporary infatuation high that will disappear after six months. Horatio acknowledges that he "once" thought of Glorvina as his "own," implying that he no longer sees her as something to possess or own. He understands at this point that she has a past that he is not a part of and that she may not feel the same as he does about their relationship, yet he loves her anyway. He accepts her return gaze as the real person, as the active subject, she is, and this acceptance allows them to come "together" and "mingle."

In Owenson's later book, *Woman and Her Master*, she repeats much of what other proto-feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, were writing about how even women in good relationships are often relegated to inferior positions. She questions why men still "perpetuate her ignorance and her dependence" (17), and she criticizes the laws that deny women any legal rights to their earnings or even their children. She says her goal for the book is "humbly but 'fearlessly' to plead her [woman's] cause, and to illustrate her agency" (21). The key word in this quote is "agency." Owenson's concern with a woman's agency supports my reading of Horatio and Glorvina's final hopeful union. She would not consciously position her heroine (or Ireland) as the dependent.

James Newcomer declares that Owenson "forced Irishmen to look at Ireland, both the nation's history and its current state, and she attracted Englishmen to look at it" (18).

As a result, Owenson's use of visuality in *The Wild Irish Girl* allowed her to teach her audience a new way of seeing by questioning traditional gender roles and the relationship between the colonizer and colonized, as throughout the novel genders and nationalities are blurred through the blending of looks and alternating power. By envisioning circumstances when the female colonial Other can and will participate in an exchange of looks with the male colonizer rather than just exist as the object of his gaze, Owenson was not just promoting reciprocity but also a more democratic, equal world. As a protofeminist, Owenson anticipated many of the critical ideas of the two centuries following her life and work and helped to make modern, more radical feminism possible. Unfortunately, the possibility for a reciprocal exchange became more complicated as the century progresses, and I will show in the following chapters how racist and sexist fears prevent these exchanges for more than a moment. But the hope Owenson suggests for a better world also continues to be reflected in nineteenth-century writings, where even former slaves look forward to a community of equals.

CHAPTER 2: “We must not . . . look amiss”: Visual and Economic Exchange in *The History of Mary Prince*

I knew that the slaves had looked. That all attempts to repress our/black peoples’ right to gaze had produced in us an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious desire, an oppositional gaze. By courageously looking, we defiantly declared: ‘Not only will I stare. I want my look to change reality.’ Even in the worst circumstances of domination, the ability to manipulate one’s gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it, opens up the possibility of agency. - bell hooks, *Black Looks*

In the poem “The Slave Dealer” in his collection entitled *African Sketches* (1834), Thomas Pringle writes of a son who returns to his mother after his time as a slave dealer. He is tortured by what he has done and cannot forget the slave woman whom he lashed to death: “Her cry is ever in my ear, / And it will not let me pray; / Her look I see—her voice I hear—/ As when in death she lay” (59). The idea that slavery negatively affects the owners and dealers as well as the slaves was a common strategy used among abolitionists, but what I find compelling about this poem is the fact that the slaver is haunted by the female slave’s voice and *look*. The power this female slave’s look represents in Pringle’s poem is suggestive of the power and agency that, bell hooks argues, inheres in a black person’s look and its ability to confer agency. The power of the look, therefore, is a crucial consideration in examining slave narratives in England. By looking back at her oppressor, the female slave asserts her subjectivity⁴¹ and forces him

⁴¹ As I noted in the introduction, hooks speaks of “agency” but I apply the more specific term “subjectivity” to my argument. I prefer “subjectivity” because it connotes the position of subject as opposed to object as well implying humanity in the subject, and a recognition that, as Althusser argues, the subject is always already embedded within

to see her as a human and what he has done as murder. Twice in the poem, Pringle uses the word “murder” to describe the slave dealer’s actions. “Murder” denotes the unlawful killing of a human being, and the poem is clear in pointing out that the beating did not take place during wartime when it would not be considered murder. The poem even says that the slave dealer and the murdered slave will both appear before God on Judgment Day, further positioning them as equals. But the slave dealer, unlike the murdered slave, has the power to re-present the moment of power and domination. Yet, the slaver’s guilt prevents him from praying and meeting “His eye” (59); he is haunted by the idea that he is no longer invisible to the slave or God, who were both witness to his actions. Unlike most white observers, Pringle seems to be already acknowledging the subordinated other’s return look.

Thomas Pringle was a Scottish writer and vocal advocate for the abolition of slavery, and after spending time in South Africa, he returned to England and became the Secretary for the Anti-Slavery Society. His poetry was inevitably influenced by his observations of and interactions with slaves, both in his role as traveler and as abolitionist. It was in this latter position that he originally met and assisted Mary Prince, whose *History* was “the first narrative of the life of a black woman to be published in England” (Salih vii). Mary Prince was born a slave in 1788 in Bermuda and was thereafter bought and sold multiple times while suffering varying degrees of abuse from her owners. In 1828, her owners took her to England, where she went to the Anti-Slavery Society and exercised her right to freedom under English law. Pringle, who saw Prince as a perfect example of the horrors of slavery, subsequently helped publish her life story,

ideology. Likewise, the implications of ethics and sympathy is important when acknowledging a person’s humanity.

The History of Mary Prince, in 1831. In this chapter, I will examine how Prince's narrative consistently presents her as involved in a visual and economic exchange. The text shows that society often tries to situate her as the inhuman other who lacks agency and the ability to look as well as represents the object in an economic exchange. However, Prince claims a look of her own by engaging with her audience and showing she is not an unfeeling object but rather a person who deserves ethical treatment and can not simply be bought and sold. As a result, Prince's text suggests she desires a reciprocal exchange with her audience as well as slave owners.

Many scholars, including Helen Thomas, Rosetta Haynes, Moira Ferguson, Mary Jeanne Larrabee, Michelle Taylor, Kremena Todorova, and Jenny Sharpe, have examined Mary Prince in reference to linguistic power or lack thereof. But there has been little focus on the visual power that Prince exercises with her *History*.⁴² Her descriptions detail her reactions to being visually evaluated and marginalized as a gendered, racialized object to be sold and mistreated. The colonizer's gaze objectifies and dehumanizes the slave and denies the possibility of an equal interaction between them. Yet, the very existence of her narrative allows Prince to assert her own observations, to look back at those gazing on her, thus asserting her unique subjectivity. In addition, she challenges the look of her audience and encourages them to look in a more reciprocal, egalitarian manner. Since slavery is inevitably and inherently economic, her look challenges not just her subject position as a woman and slave but as an object with monetary value. In this chapter, I will examine how Prince describes to outsiders (those in England) what a slave

⁴² This is not to say that no one has ever discussed the spectacle of the slave market or the gaze, but it has always been secondary or even tangential to the main argument. See Helen Cooper or Gillian Whitlock, for example.

market looks and feels like from the perspective of a slave, effectively turning the slave owners simultaneously into monsters and objects. In addition, she reveals the spectacle of a slave's punishment and the way the power of the white gaze can be subverted through her narrative.

Despite Mary Prince's attempts to reclaim power through her look, her text never fully realizes it because of the many visual and economic barriers still in place (such as, among others, the embedded and interested lenses of her amanuensis and editor and the blind fear and greed demonstrated by pro-slavery advocates, including her previous owners). Similar to Glorvina in *The Wild Irish Girl*, whose otherness is grounded in her gender and nationality, Prince must overcome racial stereotypes and fear as well as gender in order to achieve a reciprocal visual and/or economic exchange. Prince's narrative suggests that until people could understand and reciprocate the look of the slave, which represents the slave's unique subjectivity, slavery would continue to harm and fragment the world. As bell hooks argues, there needs to be a mutual recognition of racism, of otherness, in order to have a truly reciprocal encounter.⁴³ The British reader needs to embrace the multiple visual perspectives⁴⁴ and be on the receiving end of a return look. Moreover, slavery would be much more difficult to justify on moral grounds if the slave was a human subject equal to the colonizers. Of course, it is possible (and likely) that slave owners would resist this kind of egalitarian look and reciprocal exchange. But Prince's narrative suggests that by engaging with the public, social

⁴³ In "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," bell hooks argues that "Mutual recognition of racism, its impact both on those who are dominated and those who dominate, is the only standpoint that makes possible an encounter between races that is not based on denial and fantasy" (188).

⁴⁴ I do not suggest a universal gaze, because difference is crucial and inevitable.

pressure might eventually be applied to the slave owners and politicians.⁴⁵ We come to realize, however, the impossibility of a reciprocal exchange between the British and the colonial other at this moment in time, but we do gain some hints that the author and at least some of the audience hope for one in the not so distant future.

Before analyzing this overdetermined text, it is necessary to explain how I am using the word “exchange.” Most dictionaries define “exchange” as to give and receive reciprocally, but as I discussed in the Introduction and in Chapter 1, this is not as straightforward as it seems. An economic exchange is usually the action of trading one commodity for another of equivalent value, but Marshall Sahlins nuances this idea of a balanced reciprocity by arguing that the further away from one’s kin group one is the less balanced is the exchange.⁴⁶ This definition fits with the structure of slavery, wherein the exchange is more or less balanced for the slave owner and the buyer, but the exchange is obviously unequal between Prince and her owners. Prince as a slave is certainly outside the social group; thus, while her labor produces products or services that equate to money for her owner, she does not receive any recompense because of her position, which is completely subordinated.⁴⁷ As a commodity, a thing, she is not supposed to perform

⁴⁵ As an abolitionist text, this political stance would be a logical goal.

⁴⁶ In *Stone Age Economics*, Sahlins discusses the many ways social relations influence exchange. He explains, “the reciprocity is a *between* relation” stipulating two sides with “two distinct socio-economic interests” (189). Thus, reciprocity has gradations, and the proximity between the participants in terms of social relations (i.e. kin or not-kin) determines how balanced the exchange will be. For example, “to non-kin - ‘other people,’ perhaps not even ‘people’ - no quarter must needs be given: the manifest inclination may well be ‘devil take the hindmost’” (196). Likewise, Karl Marx claims, “the exchange of commodities begins where communities have their boundaries, at their points of contact with other communities, or with members of the latter” (182).

⁴⁷ The economy of slavery is complicated, of course, by the fact that many slaves could earn money outside of their regular duties and often used that money to buy their freedom. But in order to earn that extra money, the slaves’ owners needed to allow it (or

exchanges in her own right and lacks “the power to resist man” (Marx 178). To the colonizers and slave owners, Prince is property to be bought and sold for money, and as such does not deserve the kind of ethical and humane treatment an equal participant would demand.⁴⁸ However, the economic exchange is challenged when Mary Prince invokes the visual exchange, thereby rejecting the position of a slave as a commodity and object with no look of her own. Just as Owenson attempts to teach her readers a new way of looking at the Irish, Prince deliberately brings her audience face to face with the ways white people, specifically slave owners, arbitrarily refuse to acknowledge the look and humanity of slaves. Slavery relegates Prince and other slaves to hypervisibility while the white slave owners imagine they are invisible to their slaves. Yet with her narrative, Prince forces her readers to see beyond her body, to see her looking; at the same time, she makes visible the readers’ own complicity in the horrors and degradations perpetrated on slaves. Unlike the readers of *The Wild Irish Girl*, who are spectators from a distance (much as Horatio is a voyeur from a safe distance), the readers of *The History of Mary Prince* are directly addressed (“you”) and implored to change their own way of looking.

Any kind of exchange that demands reciprocity is unavoidably influenced by cultural and societal events and norms. The fifty years leading up to the publication of Prince’s *History* was rife with private and public commentaries on the nature of the slave trade and slaves themselves; most of these opinions related to whether England should or

be blind to it), the slave needed to find buyers for their products/labor, and, ultimately, the owners needed to agree to sell. Mary Prince earned enough money to buy her freedom multiple times, but her owners (particularly the Woods) never agreed to sell her or give her freedom.

⁴⁸ As an object who does not inspire Levinas’s “Thou shalt not kill” ethical sensibility in the dominant social group, slaves are inevitably subject to physical and psychological violence.

should not legally support slavery—in England itself or in its colonies. While slavery was outlawed in Britain in 1772 and the British slave trade was ostensibly abolished in 1807, the practice of slavery was not actually abolished throughout the British Empire until 1838.

England had been involved in slave trading for hundreds of years, but it was in the seventeenth century that England really increased its use of slaves, because of England's possession of West Indian islands such as Barbados and Jamaica and the rise in demand for sugar. However, as the number of slaves increased, their status, treatment, and legal position deteriorated. According to a commentator on the 1789 slave laws in the West Indies, "Negroes were property, and a Species of Property that needed a rigorous and vigilant Regulation" (qtd. in Walvin 33). There were growing fears and suspicions of female slaves in households seducing the white masters, fears of violence (poisoning and fire), and fears of revolts. Just in the two decades before the publication of Mary Prince's *History*, there were revolts in Barbados (1816), Demerara (1823), and Jamaica (1831). Alongside these growing fears and regulations was the growing power of abolitionist groups, beginning when the Quakers, with the support of other dissenting groups, founded the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787.

Many early abolitionists avoided challenging the widespread assumption that slaves were private property by focusing their protests against the conditions of the slaves rather than slavery itself (H. Thomas). At some point, abolitionists started soliciting stories and proofs from slaves themselves. Testimonials from slaves often were not enough, and the public demanded visual, physical proof of abuse. As Dwight McBride explains, the "black body that testified on stage was somehow more truthful than the

word of white abolitionists, who were mere witnesses one step removed, as they were not themselves slaves . . . The slave is the referent, the point, the very body around which abolitionist discourse coheres and quite literally ‘makes sense’” (McBride 4-6).

The spectacle of the black body acted as evidence for political movements, which reinforced ideas of otherness at the same time that they sparked desire and curiosity. In the decade immediately preceding Prince’s narrative, a nationwide campaign was launched by anti-slavery societies to exert pressure on Parliament to clarify and enforce laws regarding slavery. In fact, according to James Walvin, the Anti-Slavery Society published three million copies of tracts between 1823 and 1831 (qtd. in Cooper 196). A huge force behind this campaign was ladies’ anti-slavery associations, which produced pamphlets written by and for women (Midgley 45-59). In 1829, the Anti-Slavery Society petitioned the House of Commons for the freedom of Mary Prince, in order that she might return to Antigua, but more important to their larger agenda, they wanted to set a precedent for emancipating all slaves brought to England by their owners (Midgley 63). Obviously, it was unsuccessful, as Prince still was not free two years later when she published her *History*. However, the Society was attempting to reverse the ruling from several years before when a slave named Grace Jones was legally re-enslaved in Antigua after going to England with her owners; the High Court of Admiralty ruled that this was entirely within the law because slaves were only free in England not on colonial soil (Midgley 86).

A steady stream of black people entered and were brought to Britain from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century, and recent studies have shown that despite the end of slavery in 1833 there was a steady population of black British (both born in and

coming into England) throughout the Victorian period as well. Despite the increasing number of people of color, they were simply less recognized by white people because they assimilated into the general population through intermarriage (which was entirely legal) or were no longer counted by abolitionists. Londoners would have frequently encountered black people, whether they were servants or the sons and daughters of rich Africans who sent their children to school in England. Well-known blacks in Georgian and Victorian Britain included Olaudah Equiano, William Darby (a.k.a Pablo Fanque), Samuel Coleridge Taylor, and Mary Seacole (*Oxford* 185-187). However, as Hester Thrale Piozzi demonstrates, the white British were anxious about the presence of black people in English society. In an 1802 letter to a friend, she writes, “Well, I am really haunted by *black shadows*. Men of colour in the rank of gentlemen; a black Lady cover’d in finery, in the Pit at the Opera, and tawny children playing in the Squares,—in the gardens of the Squares I mean,—with their Nurses, afford ample proofs of Hannah More and Mr. Wilberforce’s success in breaking down the *wall of separation*” (qtd. in Edwards 146). Piozzi’s use of the word “haunted” signals to her audience that the changes resulting from the success of abolitionist movements are threatening and frightening. And it was the visible physical difference, Piozzi’s “black shadows,” that marked the black person as inherently different (Bakare-Yusuf 313).

One of the most visible black bodies was that of the Hottentot Venus. In 1810, Saartjie Baartman, known as the Hottentot Venus, was exhibited in England, supposedly representing ideas of beauty held by South Africans. The exhibition was challenged by various parties who saw it as indecent, and several abolitionists tried to determine whether Baartman was being held against her will. While they could not find any

evidence, descriptions and letters were published in various periodicals. For example, “An Englishman” protested to the *Morning Chronicle* that Baartman was “a subject for the curiosity of this country, for 2 s. a-head. This poor female is made to walk, to dance, to shew herself, not for her own advantage, but for the profit of her master” (Teltscher 81). As this letter writer demonstrates, the audience was obviously aware of the spectacle that Baartman presented and that they were automatically complicit in, not to mention the economic aspect of paying two shillings to see the “exhibit.” The protests also suggest that the ideology of the black woman as being automatically considered subhuman is perhaps not as universal as scholars seem to portray, thus proving Mary Prince did have a ready audience to target.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Mary Prince was fighting an uphill battle, for as part of an alleged scientific examination, Geoffrey Sainte-Hilaire and Frederic Cuvier describe Baartman in 1824:

During her eighteen-month stay in our capital, everyone had a chance to look at her and see for themselves the vast protuberance of her buttocks and the brutish appearance of her face. Her movements had something of rapidity and unexpectedness, reminiscent of those of a monkey. Above all, she had a way of pushing out her lips exactly in the manner we have observed in the Orang-Outan.

(Edwards 172-178)

⁴⁹ Zine Magubane argues that Sander Gilman’s seminal portrayal of the black woman as representing deviant sexuality in the nineteenth century should be complicated by a broader historical context. She questions his construction of an overarching ideology and instead suggests that there might have been differences between countries (England and France), that all “black” people were not considered to be the same, and that there were some exceptions in all Europeans seeing Africans as less than human.

Sainte-Hilaire and Cuvier's description emphasizes Baartman's physical differences at the same time that they make specific aesthetic judgments about those differences with adjectives such as "brutish" and comparisons to primates. In his essay, "Black Bodies, White Bodies," Sander Gilman argues that the Hottentot becomes an icon for not just physical difference but sexual difference between Europeans and black people (169). The most commonly referenced aspects of Baartman are her distended buttocks and lips, and Hilaire and Cuvier describe her labia as overly large as well. These descriptions seem to support Anne McClintock's argument that Africa and the Americas, and specifically the native peoples living there, become a kind of "porno-tropics for the European imagination—a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears" (McClintock 22). In addition, the exaggerated sexual differences between blacks and whites were repeated in visual culture.

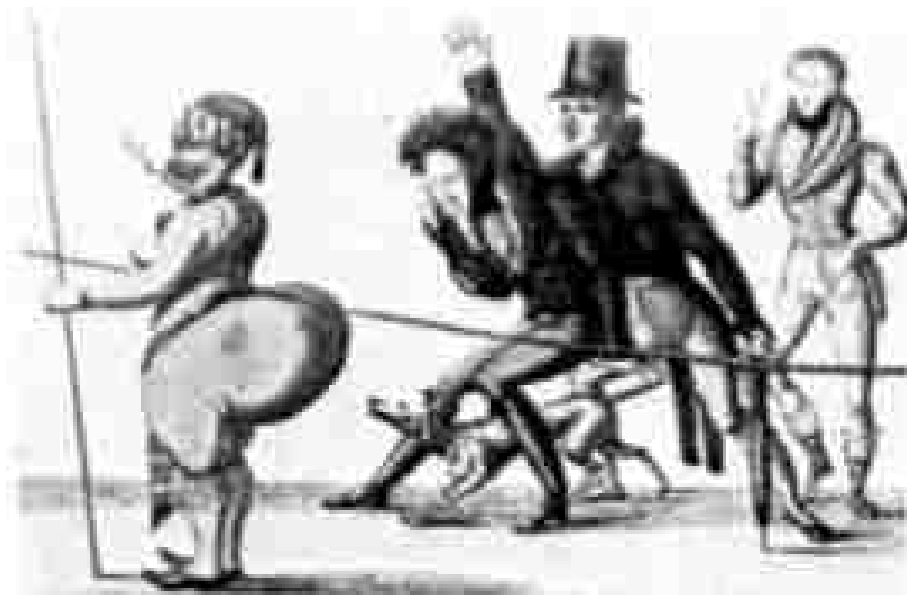


Figure 2.1: “La Venus hottentote” (1814) in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, France. Reprinted in *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French* by T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting

The above image clearly shows the emphasis Baartman’s audience put on her breasts and buttocks; the “native” costuming and face paint and pipe also define her as being completely other. However, this cartoon also satirizes the voyeuristic, objectifying male gaze by showing the three European men (and dog) all clamoring to get a closer look at her buttocks; two of them even have eye glasses in order to bring the image into focus. By associating the men with a dog, the image reduces the men’s humanity to the bestial level, ironically mirroring what they attempt to do to Baartman. The overt ethnographic purposes of these kinds of exhibits reinforced the botanist Carolus Linnaeus’s description of the *homo africanus* female as having a “distended bosom and breasts that gave milk profusely” (Farrington 14). Yet Lisa E. Farrington argues that these “spectacles were little more than peep shows offering the modest Victorian viewer (under the guise of anthropology) a voyeuristic glimpse of seminude black bodies” (16). That the size of her genitalia was directly related to her sexuality by most of these “scientists” makes the idea of a peep show seem fairly obvious. Ludmilla Jordanova argues that medical writings about women in the eighteenth century often utilized ideas of aesthetics and beauty, which resulted in not just an idealization but an objectification and sexualization of female bodies that was not the case for male bodies (30). She references the wax anatomical models used all over Europe and the fact that female wax models were overtly feminized with hair and jewelry and a passive reclining pose. The wax models were known as “Venuses,” which significantly links to Baartman’s nickname

as the “Hottentot Venus.”⁵⁰ The scientific and medical purposes of these models as well as experiments and images purporting the sharing of knowledge about the female body is overshadowed by suggestions of violence and pornography. Jordanova says that “medical practices can provide a suitable occasion for (gratuitous) bodily violence” (62); the same can be said for travel narratives and explorations of natural history.

Beyond, or in addition to, Baartman and the political maneuvering and the first-hand sightings of black people, a variety of graphic images in the form of prints, cartoons, and illustrations of slavery and the black woman (both negative and positive) influenced British perceptions of slavery and racial difference. At the end of the eighteenth century, Captain J.G. Stedman published his *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam in Guiana on the Wild Coast of South America from the Years 1772-1777*. Included with the narrative are illustrations, many of which were made by William Blake. All the illustrations of native women, including both black slaves and Native Americans, are sexualized. All but one illustration in the narrative show the women with bare breasts, and the one who is dressed in more traditional English clothing is practically busting out of her bodice. While some of this nudity may be an attempt to show actual practice, the emphasis on the partial nudity in these illustrations is gratuitous, again straying awfully close to the idea of an illicit peep show.⁵¹

50 The term “venus” itself has specific gender, sexual, or racial connotations, as it can relate to the Greek goddess, a beautiful woman, the desire for sexual intercourse, or a “palaeolithic female figurine distinguished by exaggerated breasts, belly, and buttocks” (OED).

⁵¹ I want to clarify that while many native African women (and men) did not share Europeans' hypersensitivity to nudity, the emphasis that European travelers placed on this difference justified for many of them the idea that black people were more primitive

One description and the illustration that accompanies it are of particular interest to my study, however. In Chapter 13 of Stedman's narrative, he finally discusses "the subject of cruelty" (177). He uses as his primary example of cruelty towards slaves a flogging of a young female slave he observed:

The first object which attracted my compassion during a visit to a neighboring estate, was a beautiful Samboe girl of about eighteen, tied up by both arms to a tree, as naked as she came into the world, and lacerated in such a shocking manner by the whips of two negro-drivers, that she was from her neck to her ancles [sic] literally dyed with blood. It was after she had received two hundred lashes that I perceived her, with her head hanging downwards, a most affecting spectacle. (Stedman 177)

Several details of this description seem particularly relevant, including his choice of adjective "beautiful" to describe her, the seemingly common pose (tied to a tree, naked⁵²), the violence and blood, and the way he turns her into an "affecting spectacle" for his gaze. Just as Jordanova discusses medical practices in this time period, slavery seems to demonstrate how violence towards women and the idealization of women "constitute two sides of the same coin" (62), particularly regarding black women.

and more sexual. The illustrations reinforced the Africans' otherness at the same time it provided a kind of titillation; likewise, white owners would have clothed their slaves (even if minimally) and images showing slaves without would seem to suggest that the owners (or illustrators) have some purpose for stripping the slaves - either for humiliation of the slaves or perverse visual pleasure for the viewers. In particular, the emphasis on the breasts of the native women are attempts to reflect Stedman's exotic descriptions while not threatening social norms by showing full nudity.

⁵² See also Figure 2 (1873) in Introduction.



Figure 2.2: “Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave” engraved plate by William Blake in J.G. Stedman’s *Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam in Guiana on the Wild Coast of South America from the Years 1772-1777*

In Blake’s engraving of the scene (Figure 2.2), the female slave is the focal point with several men, presumably Stedman and the slave drivers and overseer, in the background. The slave is facing out, with her arms tied to a tree branch above her head, giving the viewers a frontal view of her naked body, except for the piece of rag strategically wrapped around her hips. While she is speaking specifically about statues, Jordanova explains that unveiling the lower part of the female body would be “profoundly threatening” (88). This ideology perhaps explains why Blake included the torn fabric around the slave’s hips; at the same time, Jordanova also argues that “the whole point about veils is that they are sufficiently translucent to hint at what lies beneath them and hence they invite the viewer to fantasize about ‘the real thing’ in anticipation of

seeing it” (90). Thus, the image alludes to both modesty (presumably the viewers’ modesty not the slave’s) and erotic visual pleasure. Similarly, while her tilted head, open mouth, and wide eyes directed upwards all suggest her terror and pain, her feminine curves and one bent leg draw more attention to her body than anything else. Blake and Stedman were both avowed abolitionists, and the readers of this narrative would have most likely been sympathetic to the cause. Nonetheless, the narrative and the illustrations perpetuate the sexualization and objectification of the slave, particularly the female slave.⁵³ Stedman’s description of his black mistress, Joanna, also reinforces a hierarchy of power, with white men holding all the power; Jenny Sharpe reads Stedman’s narrative as presenting Joanna as “a sentimental heroine who always speaks with downcast eyes and tears falling on her heaving bosom” (*Ghosts* 52). Just as Glorvina in *The Wild Irish Girl* was not supposed to look boldly because of her gender, Joanna as a woman and slave must cast down her eyes, because if she were to look, then she would be asserting her subjectivity and humanity.

Besides his rather mediocre poetry, Thomas Pringle also published descriptions of his travels and observations of slavery. In his *Narrative of A Residence in South Africa*,⁵⁴ he writes of a “Caffer” woman with a little girl of 8 or 10 and an infant who were brought by a constable and put up for sale in a slave market. Her crime was that she had crossed

⁵³ In the image, the men, presumably Stedman and the overseer, are tiny figures in the background. They do seem to be gesticulating in a frantic manner, which corresponds to Stedman’s account of his attempt to stop the slave’s punishment. However, the overseer proceeded to double her punishment, which caused Stedman to run away as the man flayed her alive. Stedman subsequently vowed to never speak to an overseer again, which, of course, does not actually do any real good.

⁵⁴ While the *Narrative* was not published until 1834, his observations come from his time in South Africa in the 1820s.

the frontier without permission, and so she was being given out in servitude among the white inhabitants of the area:

While the constable was delivering his message, the Caffer woman looked at him and at us with keen and intelligent glances; and though she very imperfectly understood his language, she appeared fully to comprehend its import . . . her large dark eyes and handsome bronze countenance were full of eloquent expression . . . For my own part I was not a little struck by the scene, and could not help beginning to suspect that my European countrymen, who thus made captives of harmless women and children, were in reality greater barbarians than the savage natives of Caffraria. (Pringle 15-16)

There was still an imbalance in power between Pringle and the slave because he still viewed her as a desirable object in a “scene” (his reference to her “large dark eyes and handsome bronze countenance”) and was surprised by her intelligence. Yet, as opposed to Stedman’s Joanna always looking down, Pringle portrayed the female slave as heroically looking back at him and the rest of the audience at the market. Furthermore, the slave’s look reflected intelligence and profound human emotion, something the slave dealers and owners refused to acknowledge. Similar to the dynamics of Pringle’s poem “The Slave Dealer,” in this passage it is the look that provided the slave with a kind of subjectivity, or humanity, in her audience’s eyes - in this case Pringle himself. He was so

affected that he began to see those complicit in her enslavement as the barbarians.⁵⁵ As a result, he was already interested in the return look of the slave when he decided to promulgate the look of Mary Prince by publishing her *History*.

One of the overt complications of the *History* is that it did not come directly from Mary Prince (the racial other whose subjectivity must be acknowledged) but was mediated by Susanna Strickland, her amanuensis, and Thomas Pringle, her editor. According to William Andrews, in Afro-American autobiographies, commonly the narrator would report the facts to the amanuensis, who would record the facts while making stylistic changes, and then the editor would select, arrange, and assign significance to the facts. In addition, the editor would decide how the narrative would be contextualized (Andrews 7). While the preface emphasizes the story is “essentially her own,” we cannot help but question how much of her narrative was influenced by both Strickland and maybe more importantly Pringle. By combining Prince’s look with Strickland’s and Pringle’s, the potential exchange was not just between colonized/slave and colonizer/master but between genders, between races, between different social classes, and between different cultures. While this might initially seem to weaken Prince’s subjectivity, I suggest that it is possible to read this collaboration of looks as illustrating how the weakest object, the black female slave, achieves more power than the white male owner. With the editorial and marketing assistance, Prince’s depiction of the cruel and irrational slave owners was promulgated to a wide audience. Her story and look engages her readers to turn their own gaze on the owners and acknowledge the injustice and contradictions of slavery.

⁵⁵ The trope of the slave owners/dealers as the savage barbarians (rather than the slaves) could also be found in Romantic writings as well as abolitionist texts.

Yet, Pringle's editing and inclusion of excessive marginalia⁵⁶ and appendices definitely seem like a retreat from any kind of balancing of power. As is the case in most slave narratives, and quite a bit of women's and other marginalized groups' writing, the added material is meant to authorize the text. Pringle obviously felt that Prince's narrative could not stand on its own and needed his help in order to find a publisher and an audience. In his preface and appendices, Pringle overtly signals his "watchful eye" and observations of Prince. Even when Pringle is interacting with Prince closely and promoting her humanity, her otherness is still present and requires observation and authentication.⁵⁷ In addition, Pringle was also financially supporting Prince, first with a servant position in his household and then with an allowance of 10 shillings a week when she could no longer work (S. Thomas 130). Pringle did not seem to completely accept Prince's subjectivity or humanity, or at least her subjectivity was not as clearly defined as his. We know that Pringle did edit Prince's narrative because he says so in the preface, but even more troubling is Pringle's transparent attempt to disguise the economics behind the publication. He claims in the Preface that the Anti-Slavery Society is not involved in publishing the tract or anything that it says. And yet the edition was cheap at 1 shilling and "printed expressly to facilitate the circulation of this Tract by Anti-Slavery Societies" (5). Is Pringle deliberately disingenuous? It is certainly unclear. But again later, the Postscript for the second edition states that Mary has contracted a disease of the eyes that

⁵⁶ This excessive marginalia is reminiscent of Owenson's massive footnotes in *The Wild Irish Girl*.

⁵⁷ But "Prince's persisting 'otherness' suggests the inability of the dominant culture to control and contain her entirely" (Todorova 291).

may result in blindness,⁵⁸ so “friends of humanity” should promote the sale of the book and try to set aside a fund for Prince’s benefit. The assistance of Strickland, Pringle, and the Anti-Slavery Society’s financial support seems to suggest that Prince’s power is tenuous at best. Then again, we have also seen Pringle’s sympathetic renderings of the horrors of slavery, both in his poetry and his travel accounts, and he even seems to have been more open to the return look of the female slave. His acceptance of the female slave’s look, and his emphasis on that of Prince’s, actually suggests that his look may not have completely hindered Prince’s narrative. In fact, he may be promoting the kind of readerly engagement that Prince solicits through directing their vision, since he himself seems to already be cognizant of the power of the look (both the slaves’ and the readers’).

The other assistant in the publication of Mary Prince’s *History* was Susanna Strickland.⁵⁹ Strickland was staying in Pringle’s house as a visitor, and he asked her to transcribe Prince’s narrative because she could not write it herself. In a letter to friends, Strickland says she is writing “Mr. Pringle’s black Mary’s life from her own dictation and for her benefit adhering to her own simple story and language without deviating to the paths of flourish or romance. It is a pathetic little history” (qtd. in Whitlock “Volatile” 78). If we take Strickland at her word, then she faithfully transcribed Prince’s *History* with few editorial changes. But she automatically reduces Prince’s subjectivity and power by her description of Prince as “Mr. Pringle’s black Mary,” assigning Prince another

⁵⁸ The fact that Prince is going blind and losing her ability to look perhaps adds even more importance to her narrative.

⁵⁹ Strickland married John Dunbar Moodie shortly after transcribing Prince’s *History*, and she moved with him to Upper Canada, where she wrote a settler narrative *Roughing It in the Bush, or Life in Canada* (Whitlock “Volatile” 74). Strickland also transcribed the story of Ashton Warner, another slave, about a month after Prince’s *History* was published.

white male owner in Thomas Pringle. Similarly, the adjectives she uses to describe Prince's narrative, "pathetic little," diminish the story and Prince's life. And as Gillian Whitlock explains in her article "Volatile Subjects," Strickland is the complete opposite of Prince, her "foil", in that she represents traditional white British womanhood and all that implies, i.e. "femininity, domestic respectability, innocent womanhood" ("Volatile" 77). As such, Prince is situated immediately as the inferior other, which reinforces imperialist ideologies that justify the conquest of other places and peoples. Likewise, when Strickland gets married, Mary Prince attends the ceremony and she is again referred to by the designation "Black Mary": "Mr. Pringle 'gave me' away, and Black Mary, who had treated herself with a complete new suit upon the occasion, went on the coach box, to see her dear Missie and Biographer wed" (Whitlock "Silent" 255). Despite the belittling description, Strickland depicts Prince as watching the marriage ceremony and seeming to actively engage a look of her own. Strickland points out that she is to some degree the spectacle and object of Prince's look, denying the sense of invisibility that white people often claimed. As a result, while Pringle and Strickland do not allow for a completely equal balance of power with Mary, they do acknowledge her look and help her to bring it to the attention of a larger audience.

Many critics, such as A.M. Rauwerda, have questioned the authorship of Prince's *History* for the very reason that she had an amanuensis and editor. Rauwerda argues that manipulations of the text conceal or efface the real Mary Prince and that the text is as much about the editor as Prince. On the other hand, many other critics affirm Prince's authorship. For example, Sandra Pouchet Paquet declares Prince's "narrative retains a qualitative uniqueness that is distinctly West Indian, distinctly a black woman's, and

distinctly a slave's" (1). Likewise, *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature* states, "there is also a good deal to suggest that Strickland was not being disingenuous in her assertion that she was quite faithful in recording these narratives as they were related to her; certainly there are noticeable differences between the narrative style of Warner [the other slave narrative Strickland transcribed] and that of Prince" ("In Context" 282). The latter critics' attention to specific linguistic and stylistic features offers a compelling argument for Prince's authorship. Even if the *History* did not come directly from Prince, there is good reason to treat the memories and "look" as, in crucial respects, hers. In fact, the blending of visions, I argue, creates an even more hopeful reading, because it suggests that more people than simply Prince desire a more democratic community.

The legal wrangling and literary, textual, and performative productions of blackness all influenced how the *History* was constructed by Mary Prince, Susanna Strickland, and Thomas Pringle as well as her audience's reactions to it. Her readers would have been primed with images and descriptions of the violence enacted on slaves at the same time they would have a sense of female slaves as being both sexual and submissive, not to mention inferior. Moreover, the 1831 title page of Prince's narrative has a poem by William Cowper that immediately situates the *History* in the context of a slave market and its degradation, "the man-degrading mart." I suggest that the combination of visual spectacle, economics, and humanity inherent in the poem accurately introduces ideas that I suggest Prince and her editors meant for her audience to consider. While there are multiple examples within the narrative itself of attempts at both visual and economic exchanges, for the purposes of this chapter, I focus on two major

aspects of Prince's life: the first, her early life in Brackish-Pond, Bermuda; the second, her experiences being flogged.

Her story begins by immediately situating her in an object position, as property, by describing how she was born into slavery, with a mother who was a household slave and a father who belonged to a ship-builder. When she is still a baby, "there was a division of slaves and other property" and she is bought and given to little Miss Betsey Williams (Prince 7). So before she has even left infancy, she is part of an economic exchange wherein she (and the future labor she represents) is exchanged for money. But of course she is not a participant in the exchange; she is a commodity. Prince seems to have been happy in her early life, but as she states, it might have been because she "was too young to understand rightly [her] condition as a slave" (Prince 7). C.L. Innes suggests that in this early description, Prince presents her world from a "child's-eye view" without irony or hindsight, and it is up to the reader to see the inequalities (63).⁶⁰ This account understates the degree to which Prince is deliberate, and there are many reminders for the reader that this history is being told by an adult Prince looking back on her life for a specific abolitionist purpose. This assertion that she was too young to understand is only the first of the analytic interjections/comments that interrupt the narrative with what Moira Ferguson calls Prince's "backward glance" (285). These comments are representative of Prince's attempt to re-see her history, as traces of her developing agency. I would add to Ferguson's argument by suggesting that Prince is constructing her own look and directly confronting her audience by directing their look towards specific

⁶⁰ William Blake asserts a similar position in his poem "The Little Black Boy." He portrays the black child's innocent belief that God's love creates equality. However, the troubling deference the boy shows to his white counterpart suggests that Blake wants the reader to see the contradictions in slavery and Christianity.

events and people, essentially turning the once invisible visible (both slaves and their owners).

The little girl for whom Prince was purchased is about her own age, yet Prince “was made quite a pet of by Miss Betsey,” who leads Prince around and calls her “her little nigger” (Prince 7). While Prince and Betsey are the same age, Prince is domesticated and infantilized with descriptors such as “pet” and “little,” in addition to the obviously racist “nigger.” But Prince does not comment on this relationship; instead, she claims to love Betsey’s mother, and she explains, “My obedience to her commands was cheerfully given: it sprung solely from the affection I felt for her, and not from fear of the power which the white people’s law had given her over me” (Prince 8). Jenny Sharpe explains this was a common strategy for abolitionist texts: “This opening convention, which follows the biblical plotting of an Edenic existence before the Fall, establishes black slaves as God’s children created in a state of innocence. Equally important is the need to depict benevolent slaveholders, usually mistresses, in order to demonstrate that they are not inherently cruel; rather, it is the system of slavery that corrupts them” (“Something” 39). The affection Prince feels for her kind owner demonstrates human emotion that slaves, as subhuman others, are not supposed to have. But Prince’s willing obedience clearly points to a choice only an active subject could make. Likewise, the contradictory nature of slavery is epitomized in the “benevolent slaveholders,” who treat their slaves kindly and inspire affection but still *own* fellow human beings. Despite the superficial ideal of her early life, Prince’s continual reminders of a slave’s subordinate position alerts her readers not to be fooled. Her constant interjections from her

perspective as an adult is a sophisticated rhetorical strategy that reminds the reader how innocent and ignorant she initially was, but she knows better now.

When Mary Prince is twelve, her mistress becomes too poor to keep so many slaves, so she hires Prince out to a neighbor. While there, Prince cares for a baby and two other children, one of which would repeat her literacy lessons to Prince. Here again the implication is that Prince is ignorant and infantilized despite being the caregiver in the situation. The contradictory assumptions that Prince is both inferior and lacking agency at the same time as she is supposed to be a mature, responsible worker show how unstable the master/slave, subject/object hierarchies really are. Then, Prince receives word that her mistress has died and is told “your master is going to be married and he means to sell you and two of your sisters to raise money for the wedding” (Prince 9). Lest we forget, we are again reminded that Prince and the other slaves are not in fact a part of the family, despite her seeming close relationship with the daughter. For her master, Prince is merchandise, which can be sold to pay for his upcoming wedding. Prince goes on to describe how she never thought she would be sold away from Miss Betsey, because Miss Betsey’s grandfather had given the slaves to her and so were her property. Even Miss Betsey claims a similar idea, “You are *my* slaves, and he has no right to sell you” (Prince 10). Obviously, Mary Prince and Betsey both have a misunderstanding of property rights in the sense that Betsey does not have any. Under British laws, unless Betsey’s property was closely protected by legal stipulations in her grandfather’s will, her property was her father’s property. Thus, the economic and ideological system of slavery reflects the larger patriarchal society. The supposed owner, Betsey, should have the power, but she cannot

even follow her preference to keep Prince because she does not really own anything, not even herself.

But Prince's slave mother understands. She immediately recognizes her own and her children's place as degraded commodities in West Indian society; she says, "Here comes one of my poor picaninnies! . . . One of the poor slave-brood who are to be sold to-morrow" (Prince 10). According to the *OED*, "picaninny" commonly meant a black child or small child of any race. It did not necessarily have an offensive connotation when used by other black people, but it was used primarily for children of African origin or descent. This means that Prince's mother was most likely deliberately using the term, because only black children could be sold. The use of the word automatically suggests a profound difference from white privilege. Furthermore, while it may not be intentional, Prince's mother is also repeating the racist discourse of the time by referring to her children using such terms. But this is the discourse she is familiar with and probably the only one through which she can understand her children and their place in the world.

Prince then fully enters into the traditional life of a slave (and the traditional narrative of a life of a slave) in the poignant scene in which she and her sisters are sold at the slave market. Prince chooses to make this scene central to her *History* and deliberately visualizes it for her audience. The scene begins with Prince's mother "shrouding her children in new clothes"; this clothing is intended to make them more attractive for purchase, at the same time that the shrouding signals to the mother that she is sending her children to their deaths. Alternatively, shrouding is also a kind of protection; according to the *OED*, "to shroud" can mean "to cover so as to protect / to

screen from injury or attack.”⁶¹ By this definition, Prince’s mother is also protecting her children as best she can; her last action as a mother is a kind of ritualistic (if inadequate) attempt to protect her children from what they will experience in the slave market.

Similarly, the *OED* also defines “to shroud” as “to hide from view, as by a veil . . . to cover so as to conceal . . . to screen from observation.”⁶² Therefore, the protection Prince’s mother intends with her shrouding is also always already imbedded in the visual. The children are going to become not just objects to be sold but objects to be examined ocularly. The mother obviously understands that she may never see her children again and that she has no control over their future lives, but she can do what she can to protect her children. In effect, Mary Prince focuses on how her mother attempts to disrupt the gaze of those at the slave market in addition to the economic exchange. By shrouding her children in a kind of veil, she is trying to make them invisible and thus not available to be evaluated or exchanged for sale. Unlike the slave mother in Pringle’s description, which I referenced earlier, and unlike Prince herself, Prince’s mother is not trying to assert her own or her children’s subjectivity by looking back. Rather, she is operating under contradictory impulses to make them more appealing, and thus perhaps more suitable to domestic housework than hard labor, at the same time she is simply trying to hide her children. But that is a kind of agency, too. With her gesture, she is offering a kind of protection to the penetrating, violating gaze that underpins slavery itself. Barbara Bush explains that slave mothers reacted strongly to separation from their children and often

⁶¹ All of these definitions were in use at the time of the writing/ publication of *The History of Mary Prince*.

⁶² Critics such as Moira Ferguson in *Subject to Others* have commented briefly on the idea of shrouding relating to the separation of family equaling death, but no one seems to have made the visual connection.

caused trouble for their masters (124-5). Prince's mother's actions can, thus, be read as a form of subtle rebellion.

In this scene, Prince's mother also equates her children with chicken going to the market; chicken that are living beings, but not human, and that are a commodity that can be sold to produce eggs, or to be slaughtered for food. Innes's suggestion that the mother turns herself into the "seller rather than the nourisher and protector of her little 'chicks'"(66) misses the way Prince's mother is trying to disrupt this economic exchange, as well as the fact that she would not be considered the seller in this exchange because she is another commodity.⁶³ There is also the sense in which the mother hen with her chicks is a common biblical image equated with God and His children; thus, the metaphor extends to the protective impulse Prince's mother feels towards her children.⁶⁴ Then there is the distinct contrast between the mother's woe and Miss Betsey's, where possession is embedded in both their reactions. The mother's maternal possession of her children—"my poor children"—accentuates the contrast with the slave owner's possession of her property, "my own slaves!" (Prince 11).

When the auction is about to begin, the vendue master asks Prince's mother for her eldest child, and the mother, who has no words at this point, silently points towards Prince:

⁶³ Slaves were often allowed to earn some money on the side by washing laundry or helping on other farms, etc. In this sense, Prince's mother could have been an agent in an economic exchange, rather than the commodity. However, in regards to her position in the larger economy of slavery, she is a commodity as are her children. She is not a participant in the exchange that sells her children.

⁶⁴ See Matthew 23:37

He took me by the hand, and led me out into the middle of the street, and, turning me slowly round, exposed me to the view of those who attended the vendue. I was soon surrounded by strange men, who examined and handled me in the same manner that a butcher would a calf or a lamb he was about to purchase, and who talked about my shape and size in like words—as if I could no more understand their meaning than the dumb beasts. I was then put up to sale. The bidding commenced at a few pounds, and gradually rose to fifty-seven, when I was knocked down to the highest bidder, and the people who stood by said that I had fetched a great sum for so young a slave. (Prince 11)

Throughout the paragraph, Prince repeatedly stresses the debasing metaphor of slaves as cattle or “dumb beasts” (Prince 11). Her situation as a racialized object is most clearly present in her treatment as sub-human, as animal. She says she is handled in the same way a butcher would a calf or lamb. Widely held cultural beliefs that people of color were mentally, physically, and morally inferior justified many of the colonial projects and mistreatment of slaves. In addition, it is yet another obstacle to furthering any kind of visual exchange between two subjects.⁶⁵ At the same time, Prince’s detail of comparing herself not just to cattle but to a lamb or calf specifically casts her in the light of a young, innocent animal, perhaps reminding her potentially sympathetic audience again that she is only a child—and a child who is also representable through the Christian notion of the lamb as Christ. These references are, again, shrewd rhetorical arguments that the adult Mary Prince uses to point out the irrationality of slavery.

⁶⁵ Toni Morrison explains in *Playing in the Dark* that “collapsing persons into animals prevents human contact and exchange” (67).

Her identity as a *female* slave offers another level of terror and humiliation to the scene. Beyond the degradation she received as a black slave, her position is inherently gendered. She highlights her physical position as the object of the male gaze when she describes the men surrounding her and examining her size and shape. While she does not make any overt statements, the fact that she was a pubescent girl being “handled” by grown men is not something that can be ignored, especially because common social norms would never allow a twelve-year-old white girl to be publicly manhandled. But because she is a black slave, it is just good business. The cultural stereotype that indigenous women were hypersexualized and the common practice of male slave owners to have sexual relationships with their female slaves only emphasizes the fact that Mary Prince was very possibly being evaluated not just for her potential labor in the field or home but in her master’s bed as well. The ideology that “the captive female was both will-less and always willing” (Hartman 81) only further reinforces Prince’s lack of power.

After the auction, Prince claims, “The people who stood by said that I had fetched a great sum for so young a slave” (11-12). Within this single statement, Prince exposes her position as an object to be viewed and discussed by spectators and as an object with a specific monetary value. And yet, however problematic it may be, she reveals a sense of pride that she “fetched a great sum.” She was sold for 57 in Bermudan currency or the equivalent of 37 pounds sterling. This would correspond to \$68,500 dollars today, which is indeed a pretty sizeable investment.⁶⁶ Prince’s positioning of herself as an object (worth a “great sum”) reinforces hegemonic discourse about slaves; she has internalized

⁶⁶ According to the website “Measuring Worth”

the value system by which she is being measured.⁶⁷ However, at the same time that Prince appears to be bowing to ideas of the slave as object to be gazed upon and bought and sold as a commodity, she also provides a new way to look at the slave market. She attempts to show her audience that the cultural belief that all slaves are inferior to whites is false. Through her visualization of the slave market, she positions her reader to see the ways slave owners are morally corrupt at the same time she herself is intelligent and innocent.

When Prince describes her mother placing her and her sisters in a row to be called up by the vendue master, she takes control of the narrative and the audience's look by pointing out the observers' hard hearts. She asks, "Did one of the many by-standers, who were looking at us so carelessly, think of the pain that wrung the hearts of the negro woman and her young ones? . . . Oh those white people have small hearts who can only feel for themselves" (11). In this instance, Prince is returning the "careless" gaze of the by-standers by focusing the audience's attention on their actions and immoral behavior towards other human beings. She positions her readers so that they are engaged in the visualization of the scene, where they are observing her being dehumanized as an object for sale. Prince challenges the idea that she is a commodity to be used in an economic exchange by claiming her ability to look as well as guide her readers' looks. Karl Marx defines commodities as things that "lack the power to resist man" (178). By asserting her look and thus her subjectivity, Prince disrupts the idea of slaves as commodities, because humans cannot be commodities—they can and do resist. In addition, she specifically points out the racial gap by describing the onlookers as "white people." When Prince

⁶⁷ This is similar to the ways in which John Berger describes women internalizing the male gaze or Foucault describes prisoners internalizing the disciplinary gaze.

continues with her description of her sale, she not only deliberately shows the way the slave owners situate her as inhuman but she also proves that they are in fact the ignorant ones, not the slaves. She shocks her reader with the visual image of the “strange men” handling her and speaking about her as if she does not understand.⁶⁸ Her narrative look at them demonstrates that the slave dealers are stupid for not realizing she could understand perfectly and eventually bring them before the morally judging eyes of her audience.⁶⁹ Prince’s text shows her audience that the way these men behave proves they are the monsters and savages, not the slaves, which is similar to the French cartoon of the Hottentot Venus that I discussed earlier. While Prince’s look is rarely articulated, an exception being when she “saw” her sisters led away, Prince’s look is implied in her entire description.

Prince’s new owners were Mr. and Mrs. I-, who “seemed to think that they had a right to ill-use [their slaves] at their pleasure” (Prince 15). Prince observes several of their slaves getting flogged, “lick-lick,” before she too is subject to their violent punishment: “To strip me naked—to hang me up by the wrists and lay my flesh open with the cow-skin, was an ordinary punishment for even the slightest offense” (Prince 15). According

⁶⁸ Prince situates the “strange men” as other simply by using the word “strange.” According to the *OED*, “strange” can denote foreign or unfamiliar, but it can also suggest the abnormal or unfriendly. The multiple meanings that readers can give to Prince’s phrase further reinforces her argument that slave owners are monstrous.

⁶⁹ In a footnote to the slave market scene, Pringle gives another example of a slave market presumably to reinforce the validity of Prince’s description. The one Pringle includes is from a (white male) friend’s letter. The friend’s observation most closely resembles that of an artist finding the aesthetics of his view pleasing: “There could not have been a finer subject for an able painter than this unhappy group” (Prince 12). Yet, Pringle’s friend identifies “the tears, the anxiety, the anguish of the mother, while she met the gaze of the multitude, eyed the different countenances of the bidders, or cast a heart-rending look upon the children” (Prince 12). Once again, this points to Pringle’s awareness of the return look of the female slave, and especially Mary Prince’s since he deliberately parallels the two scenes.

to Moira Ferguson, flogging “was a public act, involving an exposed nakedness and an unsolicited male gaze, sometimes even attracting spectators and enthusiasts” (Ferguson 293). Ferguson specifically mentions the male gaze, but Prince makes clear that her female owners were often as violent as the men; public punishments situate the victim as a viewable object for consumption for both men and women. Prince says Mrs. I- applied the whip to her naked back, too, and Mrs. I- often participated in the spectacle of violence against the slaves. Prince’s first experiences (and all subsequent ones) of being flogged teach her that it was meant to be both a punishment and preventative measure as well as a scopophilic pleasure because of its usually public context. She is awakened her first night at the I-’s house by another female slave’s cries as she is flogged with a cow hide thong, and Prince is no doubt terrified of making a mistake and getting similarly punished. Later, she and the other slaves witness the female slave’s, Hetty’s, death by flogging.⁷⁰ But the flogging needs an audience not just for preventative violence but also to encourage a kind of visual sexual violence. The slaves are not just beaten; they are stripped naked first. Hetty was stripped, “notwithstanding her pregnancy, and . . . tied to a tree in the yard” (Prince 15). One might think back to Blake’s illustration for Stedman’s narrative of the slave tied to the tree as a visual spectacle. Jenny Sharpe explains that Hetty’s story was a trope of slave narratives, wherein an early shocking description of a violent flogging of a female slave provides credibility as an eyewitness and foreshadows the narrator’s similar punishments (*Ghosts* 130). And indeed, Prince’s next owner, Mr. D,

⁷⁰ In the narrative, Prince relates Hetty’s death from complications following a premature birthing. But she clearly points to the floggings Hetty received during and after pregnancy as those complications.

“often stripped [Prince] naked, hung [her] up by the wrists, and beat [her] with the cow-skin” (Prince 20).

Inexorably, these maneuvers by the masters reinforce their power over their slaves. Michel Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish* that public torture (such as flogging) simply proves the power of the one in charge, “to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign. The public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power” (49). However, as other critics have pointed out, Foucault’s analysis of discipline does not take into account women or violence against women. In reference to my particular argument, Foucault neglects to consider how that power structure can be disrupted when the visual spectacle of violence is reframed by the subordinated other’s look. In these scenes of abuse, Prince opens the traditional blind eye of her audience to the horrors experienced by slaves. She positions her readers as part of this scene by forcing them to see both her look and the objectifying gaze of the slave owners, whom she reveals to be monsters who take pleasure in torturing human beings. She also clearly implies the irrationality of slavery, because it makes no logical sense for an economic system to abuse or destroy goods that it is trying to sell at a high price. Along with questioning slavery as a system, the narrative thrust also definitely aims to humanize Prince and other slaves such as Hetty. However, Prince’s verbal assertion of these events are not considered enough to entirely convince her audience, because as Janice Schroeder suggests, “there is a sense that the class, gender, and racial status of the subjects make them unfit witnesses to their own experiences of pain” (278).

When Thomas Pringle attempted to garner support, particularly monetary support, for Prince after the publication of her *History*, he approached various regional anti-slavery societies. One such group, the Birmingham Ladies Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves, sent a letter to Pringle requesting verification of Prince's scars from flogging. According to Ferguson, women's groups found flogging of women to be particularly horrific. They were troubled by the "absolute control and remorseless abuse of the female body by males," which they felt was un-Christian (Ferguson 293). In addition, flogging often attracted spectators, thereby exposing the female body to the "unsolicited male gaze" (Ferguson 293). As seen in Stedman's narrative, descriptions and illustrations of the flogging of female slaves were often thought of as an "affecting spectacle" with which to persuade people of how wrong slavery is, at the same time it perhaps provided a secret scopophilic pleasure for some.⁷¹ And one can understand why British ladies, who were constricted under their own societal regulations regarding sexuality and the public space, were so horrified and fascinated by the idea.

As a result of this request from the ladies society, Mrs. Pringle, Susanna Strickland, and two other women acted as witnesses to Prince's revelation of her scars, and their testimony is included in an appendix to later editions of the *History*. They assert, "the whole of the back part of [Prince's] body is distinctly scarred, and, as it were, *chequered*, with the vestiges of severe floggings" (Prince 64). This visual proof that Prince is in fact telling the truth adds weight to her written narrative. As Foucault explains, "The body, several times tortured, provides the synthesis of the reality of the deeds and the truth of the investigation, of the documents of the case and the statements

⁷¹ Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. argue the importance of slave narratives in ocularly convincing readers with visual descriptions, and Prince does this.

of the criminal, of the crime and the punishment” (Foucault 47). But at the same time, Prince is again returned to the position of object of the white gaze. Some critics have suggested that Prince voluntarily presents her body as a visual object in order to assert her veracity, and that this is a powerful move on her part. I find this hard to reconcile with the fact that the Ladies Society is actually holding all the power in terms of their potential pecuniary assistance. What makes this even more complicated is the connection between flogging and economics in its linguistic usage. According to the OED, “flogging” had another meaning in the 1830s; specifically, it meant “selling or offering for sale.” Moreover, by 1919, “flog” had the added connotation of “offering for sale *illicitly*.” So once again, we have the conflation of the visual and the economic, this time explicitly with negative connotations. The economic denotation of “flogging” is easily linked with the abuse showered upon slaves, who were often commodities for sale themselves. However, the visual aspect of the whipping of slaves coupled with the illicitness of the sale seems to point ominously back to the taboo pleasure some white viewers (usually men but sometimes women) might feel in looking at victimized black women’s bodies.

Gillian Whitlock also notes that while Mrs. Pringle’s investigation of Prince is a benevolent scene, it still reminds us of those other parts of Prince’s *History* where she is “exposed, open to view” (Whitlock “Volatile” 82). Moreover, Saidiya Hartman agrees with Foucault and Whitlock that readers of slave narratives seemed to need the crimes of slavery to be made visible (through evidence on the body itself or through tragic scenes) in order to prove the veracity of the slave testimony (22). These requirements made by the audiences of Prince and other slaves certainly do act as a way to reposition the

inferior other as lacking full subjectivity or agency. Nevertheless, I argue that Prince's (and even her editor's) attempts to realign the power structure through giving her a look and engaging the audience proves hopeful.

Yet, as noted in the introductory chapter, simply reversing the look is not enough. These moments where Prince claims her own look are important, but it is the inclusion of Prince's look within a larger context, and the suggestion of a visual exchange wherein the white subject acknowledges the slave's look and subjectivity, through which I really propose a rereading of her *History* and other slave narratives. While the scenes from Prince's *History* suggest that the black body was hypervisible, Prince was also not supposed to see her white masters. bell hooks's notion that blacks were not to have a gaze of their own is crucial in understanding why Prince's look is so powerful. In her essay "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination," hooks discusses the ways whites would deny the subjectivity of blacks by denying their ability to look directly. According to this argument, whites maintained their power over their slaves by dehumanizing them, and if Prince claims her ability to look (and bring white people under observation) then she challenges this idea. Often *within* the narrative, Mary Prince definitely seems to represent this nonexistent gaze, despite (or maybe because of) how much her physical presence encodes the spectators' reactions to her. However, the very production of this narrative is a way for Mary Prince to assert her own observations, to look back at those gazing on her. She describes to readers in England what a slave market looks like from the perspective of a slave, effectively redirecting the gaze towards the slave owners and proving them monsters. She creates scenes of abjection and abuse for her white readers to see how the objectifying white gaze can itself be an implement of abuse, or possibly the

originating source of such violence. Helen Cooper describes Prince as “reversing the English ethnographic gaze to focus on English bestiality . . . and refocuses attention away from the rebellious slave and onto the slave owners’ brutality” (200-201). Prince’s readers join her in reviewing the scene, thus negating her invisibility, and instead subjecting the slave owners to an evaluating gaze. At the same time, she rejects and encourages her readers to reject the social economy in which she is not a participatory agent.

The British fascination with racial inferiors was reflected in many facets of their culture, from travel accounts such as Pringle’s and Stedman’s to touring exhibitions such as that of the Hottentot Venus; and, moreover, the sexualizing discourse and visual imagery of slave women strongly suggests that a physical desire coexisted along with an intellectual one (whether it was explicitly articulated or not). Likewise abolitionists, a group in which Pringle and Strickland are a part, seemed actively to seek out information about and interaction with subordinated peoples, specifically slaves. And one can assume that the audience of Prince’s *History* was already open to learning about the black other since they were reading her narrative - and paid to read it as well! But accepting the other’s subjectivity is more difficult. There was a willingness or desire to participate in an exchange when the colonial other was the commodity in an economic exchange (mistakenly assuming that would preserve all the power and control on the side of the British). However, when the exchange is one of vision, where the colonial other attempts to be a participatory member, there is a reactionary fear.⁷² Mary Prince’s attempt to show

⁷² By using the term “fear,” I do not mean they were frightened in a physical sense; more, they felt their position of power was threatened by the possibility that the white,

her own look, at the same time she is guiding that of her audience, allows her to disrupt the objectifying gaze of the white male; while perhaps not an equal exchange, the multiple looks she manages and organizes hints at her potential power. Of course, not all readers react with fear; the abolitionists seem actively to encourage a more equal standing between white and black. But enough people did react negatively to this threat that a balanced power dynamic is ultimately impossible to sustain.

After the publication of *The History of Mary Prince*, James McQueen published an article in *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, which denounced the veracity of Prince's claims and attacked Thomas Pringle the editor as a liar who wanted to bring down the power of the colonial empire. His long article ostensibly is a call to punish or at least ignore Pringle and the other abolitionist troublemakers for making such libelous claims about good colonizers like Mr. and Mrs. Wood,⁷³ who were Prince's last abusive owners. However, as we read further in the article, we gain some clues to one of the underlying problems raised by Mary Prince's *History*: money and profit. McQueen writes:

In no civilized community, but more especially in a British community, can, or ought, men for ever to submit to be calumniated, reviled, and persecuted . . . The consequences to this country will be, throwing altogether aside the probable destruction of human life [by which he means the loss of the Woods' reputation], the LOSS OF ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY MILLIONS STERLING of

European male may no longer be at the top of the food chain. The threat was to the ideological and political system from which they reaped rewards.

⁷³ McQueen pointedly remarks that while Pringle's publication was paid for by blockheads (his name for the supporters of the Anti-Slavery Society), the bad press for the Woods destroys their business.

British capital and property, vested in and secured over these colonies . . . The immediate interference of government can alone prevent this tremendous catastrophe. Government must tell this misled country, that the West India colonists have been unjustly accused. (754)

As McQueen demonstrates, the West Indian colonists and their investors back in England were frightened when they realized that they were not in fact invisible, that with narratives such as Mary Prince's, the gaze was being turned back on the slave owners and their abusive, dehumanizing practices, which could result in profit losses. McQueen represents the defensive posture that pro-slavery advocates then had to occupy when presented with the idea that the workers they repeatedly used and abused were in fact human subjects. McQueen's vitriolic reaction against Pringle and Prince⁷⁴ only makes him seem desperate, at least to modern readers. But contemporaries noticed this as well; Leitch Ritchie, who wrote a sketch of Thomas Pringle's life in the 1838 edition of his *Poetical Works*, described McQueen's "criticism" as "composed of the vulgar and silly blackguardism that usually distinguishes, in our civilized age, political partisanship, and confers upon the partisan the air of a common street ruffian" (civ). The absolute refusal of pro-slavery advocates and slave owners like the Woods⁷⁵ to even consider Prince's

⁷⁴ "In *Blackwood's* McQueen made unmistakable sexual innuendos, which suggest that 'Pringle and his associates' had a voyeuristic interest in 'black filth, debauchery, and uncleanness' and that Pringle was probably having a sexual relationship with Prince, who was a 'profligate slave', referring to Pringle's 'secret closetings and labours with Mary (in London servants are not removed from the washing-tub to the parlour without an object)'" (S. Thomas 118).

⁷⁵ Despite repeated attempts to gain her manumission, including several offers of money and a couple of lawsuits, the Woods refused to free Prince.

subjectivity and humanity prevented Prince's attempt at a visual exchange from being effective much beyond her narrative and abolitionists.

However, I argue that the publication of Mary Prince's *History* reveals a desire to know the other and an affirmation of Prince's subjectivity and look on the part at least of the Anti-Slavery Society and its supporters. Pro-slavery proponents (such as McQueen) absolutely reject this, out of a variety of fears, and greed no doubt, and the Woods continued to unreasonably refuse to grant Prince her freedom outside of England. But, ultimately, I contend that Prince presents hopeful moments where her look and her engagement with her audience's look challenges the institution of slavery and race. In the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, bell hooks describes the power of black people's look and the claim it makes towards agency. She declares that slaves were always already looking and defiantly and "courageously" attempting to "change reality" with their looks (hooks, *Black* 116).

Mary Prince does just that in her narrative; she resists the repression of her look and dares to look back at her abusers and her complicit English audience. She is fully aware of the ways that her oppressors tried to deny her look and story; for example, Prince concludes her history with an abolitionist call to end slavery, wherein she states, "we must not speak up nor *look* amiss, however much we be abused" (Prince 38). But her whole *History* represents the desire for her "look to change reality," as articulated by bell hooks. In her narrative, Prince offers us a rare and complicated example of the attempts a black female slave makes to assert some kind of subjectivity or agency within the confines of a piece of propaganda. Her *History* implies that slavery will continue to harm people and fragment the world until white people could understand and reciprocate the

gendered, racialized look of the slave.⁷⁶ Although still not equal, Mary Prince's narrative represents a blurring of the boundaries between white and black, male and female gazes; literally, the vision of Prince, Strickland, and Pringle are merged. While an exchange of gazes seems impossible when the events in Prince's life occur, this narrative allows Prince (even if it is only in a limited way) to assert her own subjectivity by returning the gaze of the colonizers and directing the look of her readers towards them as well. Prince's *History* is much more complicated than *The Wild Irish Girl* in regards to the intersection of vision, gender, and empire, not only because of its particular genre of slave narrative but also because race creates another barrier or veil to negotiate. Unlike Owenson's novel, where the reciprocal exchange of looks between the British and colonial other is directly achieved, *The History of Mary Prince* offers a more complex interaction and in the end can not be fully sustained. The dominant participant in the exchange (white Britains) must be willing to listen to Prince's story and acknowledge her look and humanity, but with compelling economic reasons not to, a reciprocal exchange seems limited to a specific sympathetic audience. Nevertheless, the moments I identify in Prince's narrative where she is showing her audience her control of the look along with holding a mirror up to the audience's own complicity challenges the power structure currently in place. Likewise, the very existence of the narrative suggests that at least some of her audience had a wish for such an exchange, which, ultimately, gives us a much more hopeful version of a slave narrative than we might expect.

⁷⁶ Of course, a reciprocal visual exchange does not then negate all racism or end slavery. However, it is an important step towards a more egalitarian way of looking and, potentially, interacting with others.

CHAPTER 3: “Don’t look at him”: The Public Eye in Charles Dickens’s America

In January 1842, America experienced a celebrity spectacle that it had hitherto never seen. Charles Dickens, a.k.a. Boz, the author of beloved stories such as *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, travelled to America to observe the adolescent nation and its customs; as a kind of British representative with the ability to share his observations with a wide audience, Dickens had a certain degree of power. However, at the same time that he was observing America, he was also the object of the public gaze. Dickens was still a young man—he turned 30 while in America—and his physical person was as much a topic of conversation as his literary genius. In the February 14, 1842 edition of *The New-York Mirror: A Weekly Gazette of Literature and the Fine Arts*, an illustration of Dickens accompanied an article calling him “the most eminent British writer that has ever visited America.” The importance that was attached to Dickens and his visit is clearly articulated in this description, and many newspapers urged their readers to show him respect without losing their dignity. The *New-York Mirror* writes, “We ask of our countrymen that he may be received as beseems a man; with a plain and earnest simplicity that becomes us in all we do; without exaggerated homage, which would infallibly disgust him and degrade us; with due self-respect, teaching him, in the midst of our admiration, that we have sources of greatness within ourselves, which can sustain us with dignity in all emergencies” (“Welcome”). The newspapers understood that Dickens would no doubt be writing a book about America, and they wanted him to portray the country and its people in the most flattering light. Thus, they encouraged people to show him the greatness of America, which he could then share with the world.

But in addition to Dickens's evaluating gaze, the newspapers encouraged the American public eye. They explain that "he has come in person to show himself to his American readers" and he is "a writer who has sprung from silent obscurity to the very zenith of a world-wide popularity under our own eye. Every step of his progress from the beginning we have watched" ("Welcome," *Mirror*). Thus, Dickens was not just there to gaze at and judge America and its people but also to be gazed at and judged by Americans. His popularity brought him under the eye of the public and his actions were watched and commented upon. In fact, the newspaper seems to suggest Americans have a right to watch him, and he has a responsibility to show himself because they have watched his rise in fame; in his capacity as a celebrity, Dickens's audience felt he belonged to them. Another newspaper declared that the spectacle that America made of Dickens by hosting enormous receptions was something of which to be proud: "the enthusiasm attending Mr. Dickens's welcome to our shores has afforded a spectacle which may justly be regarded, not alone with satisfaction, but even with pride" ("Reception"). Therefore, while one might have been admonished for staring too openly at Dickens himself, Americans thoroughly enjoyed the visual spectacle and pomp that went along with welcoming a VIP to their country. These receptions occurred in several of the big cities; one particularly extravagant one with three thousand guests was called the Boz Ball and had panels covered with scenes from Dickens's works, medallions with Dickens's portrait, and rosettes with "a likeness of Boz stamped upon it" ("Compliment"). Even before the event, *The Albion* suggested the ballroom should have "various compartments of 'Curiosity Shop,' in which the productions of "Boz" may be illustrated . . . and shadowing forth, in living pictures, the graphic and glowing

delineations of this singularly gifted and original author” (“Welcome,” *Albion*).

Dickens’s American readers were clearly aware of the power of visual representations, both of Dickens himself and of his written work; through the different illustrations and graphics they appropriated his image and his literature for themselves.

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which Dickens attempted to assert a uni-directional and evaluating gaze, which upholds traditional power structures, throughout his visit to America and the subsequent publication of his travel book *American Notes* (1842) and novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1842-44). However, moments erupt in *Martin Chuzzlewit* where a reciprocal visual exchange is possible, providing subliminal traces of an egalitarian community. Before Dickens crossed the Atlantic, several British and European writers had made the trip to America and published their accounts, providing Dickens with some preconceived ideas of what he would find. During his inspections of American institutions and trips to representative American cities, Dickens recorded his observations in letters and *American Notes*, making public his views on America and such topics as slavery. All of Dickens’s writing about America in the early 1840s⁷⁷ points to Dickens’s assumption of a powerful, objectifying gaze because he is an important British author, which situates him above his American audience who are still considered inferior others. In addition, he portrayed himself as trying not to look directly at or meet the eyes of those he is observing—there is always a distance in order to keep the hierarchy intact. Americans were unfamiliar others that Dickens and European writers felt needed to be observed and defined. Dickens occupied a unique position because he

⁷⁷ Dickens does return to America towards the end of his life, and his opinions do change somewhat. For this chapter, however, I will only focus on Dickens’s writings about America in the early 1840s, when he visits America for the first time and publishes *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

represented the British lion, America's former colonial master, as well as the literary and cultural heights Americans self-consciously strove for. For Americans, Dickens was someone they wanted to impress, because he embodied a British audience. Americans subsequently were on their best behavior, or should have been according to the newspapers, because they were in turn aware of Dickens's (attempted) evaluating gaze. Likewise, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the titular character (the younger)⁷⁸ reflects many of Dickens's observations of America. The illustrations created by Hablot Browne to accompany *Martin Chuzzlewit* also serve to visually represent Dickens/Martin's observations and provide added insight to the novel. Yet, always present is the possibility that a person's observations might be wrong, that their eye may have been deceived.

Moreover, when these inferior others looked adoringly at Dickens, Dickens felt that they should remain at a distance and not gaze directly at him. At first, Dickens was extremely flattered by the royal welcome he received by the Americans, declaring "There never was a King or Emperor upon the Earth, so cheered, and followed by crowds, and entertained in Public at splendid balls and dinners, and waited on by public bodies and deputations of all kinds" (Dickens, *Letters* 43).⁷⁹ Dickens's reference to himself as a "King or Emperor" suggests that he was thoroughly enjoying being a public figure who was situated above everyone else, not to mention the imperial connotations of such labels. However, as his time in America progressed, his descriptions started to change, and the direct and unapologetic staring and inspecting started to bother him (Dickens, *Letters* 154).⁸⁰ The public eye was always trained on Dickens as a recognizable celebrity

⁷⁸ Whenever I refer to Martin Chuzzlewit, I am referring to the younger man in the novel.

⁷⁹ Letter to Thomas Mitton, 31 January 1842

⁸⁰ Letter to Daniel Maclise, 22 Mar 1842

and he suffered invasions of privacy as a result.⁸¹ For example, while sitting on the train, waiting for it to depart for Washington, men and boys “let down all the windows” of his train car and “fell to comparing notes on the subject of my personal appearance, with as much indifference as if I were a stuffed figure” (Dickens, *AN* 127). Dickens’s sense of being an inanimate object, “a stuffed figure,” for the precocious American youth signals the threat he felt to the traditional colonial relationship where he was usually superior. Jerome Meckier argues that these “gaping Americans taught him the meaning of dehumanization” (Meckier 6). All of a sudden, Dickens no longer has control of the panoptical gaze; he is now the observed, which put his sense of power and self at risk.

His experiences of being inspected are translated into Martin’s experiences in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. When Martin is told he will have to hold a “le-vee” for the citizens of the town to pay their respects, because he is “quite a public man,” Martin is unnerved (Dickens, *MC* 314). He questions, “What do they want to see me for?” (Dickens, *MC* 315). Similar to Dickens, he is other to Americans because he represents the British lion. As more and more people rush into the crowded room to shake hands with Martin, none leave the room but rather “stood there, bolt upright and staring” at Martin. In addition, he is also made the object of two journalists’ gazes:

⁸¹ Joss Marsh explains that Dickens would have been recognizable because of his known habit of walking and his flamboyant clothes. She also claims that most people would have seen his picture in shop windows, or in the instance above, illustrated newspapers. Dickens was, Marsh goes on to say, the “most photographically famous person in Britain outside the royal family.” Apparently, by the late 1850s when people were collecting photographs of famous people, “every family” had one of Dickens. And Marsh argues, “to be photographically famous was to be more *familiar*” (104-6).

If Martin put one boot before the other, the lower gentleman was down upon him; he rubbed a pimple on his nose, and the upper gentleman booked it. He opened his mouth to speak, and the same gentleman was on one knee before him, looking in at his teeth, with the nice scrutiny of a dentist. Amateurs in the physiognomical and phrenological sciences roved about him with watchful eyes and itching fingers . . . They had him in all points of view: in front, in profile, three-quarter face, and behind. Those who were not professional or scientific, audibly exchanged opinions on his looks. (Dickens, *MC* 316)

Indeed, they treat him as if “he had been a figure of stone, purchased, and paid for, and set up there, for their delight” (Dickens, *MC* 317). Similar to Dickens feeling like a stuffed figure, Martin imagines himself as a “figure of stone,” another inanimate object. His sense of no longer being viewed as a person, but rather a purchased commodity for someone else’s use compares to slave auctions; indeed, Jerome Meckier argues, “Dickens has the correspondents inspect Martin as callously as slaveowners contemplating a purchase” (Meckier 8). Yet, as a white upper class male, what Martin experiences is a humorous shadow of the horror Mary Prince endured as an actual slave. While Dickens felt he and his character were objectified in the same dehumanizing way as slaves indicates his awareness of the power of the gaze, he was not in fact considered subhuman. He may not have been treated with deference, but he was not sold or raped. Instead, the threat was to his superior position where he should have been immune to such visual evaluations. Furthermore, despite the implication that he understood the objectification of slaves, by comparing himself to a slave, he only reinforced the idea that

he was unfortunately blind in certain areas. Yet, the scene also reinforces the idea of Martin as an outsider and ultimately helps him to see more clearly. It seems as if Dickens and his fictional character in some ways represent the other side of Mary Prince's counter gaze. Even if their humanity and subjectivity were not questioned (as slaves' were), it makes them experience what it was like to be on the receiving end of the gaze, which repositions one's place in the power structure.

This reversal of the gaze greatly disturbed both Dickens and Martin's sense of identity (as subject rather than object), when the people they deemed inferior, including women, children, and men of a lower class or different race, inspected and analyzed them. Dickens and Martin insisted on seeing Americans as other, but in the American context it was they, Dickens and Martin, who were other to Americans. Dickens may have desired to maintain a panoptical, one-way gaze (and the illusion that he held the power), but Americans did not let him. As Lauren Goodlad points out, Foucault's theory regarding the panopticon is challenged by the fact that Jeremy Bentham's original plan called for the central observer to be overseen, "superintended," by the public (543). Thus, not only does Foucault's panoptical theory allow room for anyone to take control of the observer position, but there is also the distinct possibility that the observer's gaze in turn is being disciplined by a societal, public gaze. This societal function directly links to Althusser's sense of the subject as being the active doer as well as subject to larger ideological forces. In his own life, Dickens resisted the American other's look and tried to ignore the public gaze, but I argue that moments in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, such as Martin's recognition of his blind selfishness and his eventual exchange of looks with Mark Tapley and, more importantly, Mark's consistently open eyes and willingness to

exchange looks with everyone, point towards Dickens's (perhaps unconscious) hope for a better, more egalitarian future.

Martin Chuzzlewit, like all of Dickens's novels, has an unwieldy number of characters and several different storylines. For the purposes of this chapter, the relevant part of the novel concerns the story of young Martin Chuzzlewit, who is estranged from his rich grandfather (for whom he had been the presumptive heir). After being denied an apprentice position with Mr. Pecksniff, whose actions are always entirely selfish, Martin is forced to reconsider his place in the world. With no money and no immediate prospects, he determines to seek his fortune in America, in the meantime leaving his fiancée to fend for herself. Mark Tapley, a former employee of a local pub/inn, joins Martin ostensibly as his servant, although Mark provides most of the capital for the venture. Martin and Mark intend to set up an architecture business once they reach America. However, upon arriving in America, they are confronted by all of the ill manners and vulgarities of the American people. In addition, Martin is conned into purchasing (with Mark's money) land in a settlement named Eden. When they reach Eden, Martin and Mark both become deathly ill because of the unhealthy environment. Because of his near-death experience, Martin realizes he has been selfish and taken advantage of Mark's good nature. Martin and Mark then proceed to borrow money to flee America and return to England.

American independence, of course, did little to abate the English sense of superiority over their former colonists. Americans were "almost the same but not quite," to use Homi Bhabha's apt phrase (122). In his seminal work *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha describes the ambivalent practice of mimicry that colonized people used to both

imitate and resist colonizing forces. Americans, while not subjugated to the same extent as other colonized territories,⁸² did have to create their national identity once they gained independence from England. The recently post-colonial American subject is a “partial presence” whose “representation of difference” from the English is “itself a disavowal” of a unique British identity (Bhabha 123). When this American partial representation redirects the gaze back towards the imperial subject (such as Dickens or Martin), the “whole notion of identity” is rearticulated (Bhabha 127). Mark Tapley’s ability to engage in a visual exchange suggests that he (as an imperial white male) is both open to acknowledging the subjectivity of the other and having to defend his own identity in return. In addition, Mark himself represents a kind of partial presence because he is not just a white male he is of a lower class than those in charge (people like Martin). His gaze can also disrupt the authority of colonial discourse, because he represents the potential for a more egalitarian society (which capitalism and the Industrial Revolution promised). Yet, even when Mark demonstrates that reciprocal visual exchanges can occur in the American context, they are primarily male-male, which suggests reciprocity in the novel is limited to a particular gender in Dickens’s novel.⁸³

⁸² I am speaking specifically of white Americans who represent the immigrant population. I am using the label “American” in this limited sense, because that is the way that Dickens did. The native population, who were certainly subjugated in many ways, were not considered “regular” Americans - they were an entirely different, inferior group. Moreover, the language of (neo)colonialism is useful to determine the cultural context of Dickens’s visit.

⁸³ Although *Martin Chuzzlewit* contains several memorable female characters, the American women are secondary to Dickens’s main concerns and usually only represent American males’ decency or act as objects of derision. In particular, he derides the Literary Ladies, who are represented by the obnoxious Mrs. Hominy and the ridiculous Mrs. Brick. Dickens’s denial of strong, sympathetic female characters again suggests a blind spot in Dickens’s vision and a resulting deception when he shares his observations with his audience. In this case, his blind spot is not to racial differences but to gender.

The America that Dickens encountered, and subsequently portrayed in his writing, was in the midst of an economic depression that lasted from 1837-1843, and similar problems in Europe resulted in a flood of immigrants. The “Hungry Forties” was characterized by such events as the potato famine in Ireland and the often mistaken idea that immigration to America was the answer. In addition, the depression “spawned the ‘mammoth’ papers, newspapers of enormous physical size that specialized in literary piracy,” which was a problem Dickens felt needed to be eradicated by international copyright (Webb 63). Moreover, the relationship between America and Great Britain was uneasy because many Americans were angry that the British insisted on their right to stop ships with a U.S. flag and search for slaves (Simmons 110).

Dickens’s American trip lasted from January to June 1842, a bit shorter sojourn than those of other well-known travelers. However, it is because of these travelers and their published accounts of America that Dickens perhaps felt he was already somewhat familiar with America and did not need more time in order to accurately portray it to others. Ella Dzelzainis claims that “Between 1815 and 1860 some two hundred Britons produced travel accounts of their trips to the States” (211), giving Dickens an enormous catalogue to peruse and a new genre to pursue. While he made several comments about not necessarily having any plans to publish his observations, he had been in contact with publishers before his trip and *American Notes* was published in October 1842, only a few months after his return to England. Scholars have long known that Dickens was influenced by other travel accounts; he owned the narratives by Frances Trollope, Harriet

Women do not even have the chance to engage in a reciprocal exchange because patriarchy always wins out.

Martineau, and Captain Marryat. Dickens even repeated some of the common criticisms of America and its people, including slavery, emphasis on money, intrusive behavior of strangers, and eating and spitting habits. Also, Dickens's descriptions of the swampy and unhealthy land along the rivers in the Midwest definitely seemed to reflect earlier descriptions, and the wretched Eden in *Martin Chuzzlewit* could be compared with Trollope's descriptions of the American heartland.

In her 1832 travel narrative, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, Frances Trollope described what she saw from her position on a riverboat traveling up the Mississippi. She described the "sad dwellings" and their "wretched inhabitants" as a "spectacle" she could not observe without feeling compassion (27). She went so far as to say, "I never witnessed human nature reduced so low, as it appeared in the wood-cutters' huts on the unwholesome banks of the Mississippi" (28). Figure 3.1 accompanies the text on the facing page. The miserable expressions on the faces of the people and the swampy water lapping at the edge of the cabin emphasize Trollope's description of the horrible conditions settlers faced in the American Midwest. Yet at the same time that Trollope sympathized with the unhealthy living conditions of these people, she also maintained an aesthetic distance by calling it a "spectacle." This is a common mode of reflection for European travelers in that they viewed the world as there for their edification and viewing pleasure.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ As discussed in Chapter 1 in relation to the picturesque and sublime, even if a scene is frightening or sad, travelers can feel a kind of pleasure in their emotional reaction because the scene is at a safe distance and they are not directly affected.



FIGURE 3.1: “Wood-Cutters Cabin on the Mississippi” in Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832)

The distance Trollope maintained can also relate to the spectacle of poverty that scholars such as Tim Fulford, Gary Harrison, and Elizabeth Helsinger have identified in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century. As Harrison argues about William Cowper’s poetry, the spectator is located “above the scene of poverty so that the poor appears as part of a panorama of rural society subject to the spectator’s privileged gaze” (566). There are obvious political implications to such a visual construction, but as Harrison and others argue, it is when the spectator comes face to face with the poor that sympathy plays a role. Similarly, I argue that it is when Dickens and his fictional characters are more directly confronted with the other’s gaze that they are shaken from their privileged prospect view.

As a former colony of England, America the “rebellious offspring” was a particular source of confusion and fear to England, its “mother country” (Ingham xiii). Much of the rhetoric used by the English and citizens of other imperial countries clearly

delineated the relationship between the knowledgeable, powerful parental nation and the ignorant, unformed childlike other. The justification for colonialism was that the poor, primitive other needed enlightenment (in the form of education and religion); meanwhile, of course, the land and resources were exploited for the benefit of the colonizing nation. As Bill Ashcroft explains, “The child, at once both Other and same, holds in balance the contradictory tendencies of imperial rhetoric,” wherein education and enlightenment are meant to soften the (often violent) domination and exploitation of the colonized (Ashcroft 184). Ashcroft suggests that the metaphor of the colonized country as child suggests its need of guidance and direction because it lacks form. The new colony is situated as an objectified other to constantly discipline and keep at a distance. However, the metaphor of childhood is inherently unstable, because the child does eventually grow up; not to mention the fact that the child-like nature ascribed to the colonized nation was entirely in the minds of the colonizers. The possibility of the child, the colonized nation, claiming a subjectivity of its own results in the colonizer’s use of disciplinary and surveillance measures. As Ashcroft argues, “The strategies of surveillance, correction, and instruction which constitute the child’s education transfer into the disciplinary enterprise of empire” (Ashcroft 186). While America would technically be a postcolonial child, its relatively recent independence and large area of undeveloped land situated it in the position of a fledgling country trying to find its cultural identity, which was in direct contrast to England’s long history and clear hierarchical social structure. The transition from colonized to independent was rarely clear-cut or immediate, so Dickens’s paternalistic and judgmental observations are not surprising.

While Dickens was progressive in many of his views, for instance regarding working conditions for the poor, he still reflected many of the imperialistic ideas of his time. His descriptions of America certainly repeated much of the inherent hierarchical sentiment established by colonialism. But his assertion of a unidirectional gaze despite the public gaze he is the object of demonstrates the very instability that Ashcroft describes. Dickens seemed to be practicing the one-way, objectifying gaze that hegemonic groups often employ in order to deny power to inferior others. But whether he likes it or not, the public is the always-present observer. The Americans were aware of this, as can be seen by their desire to appear in a positive light to Dickens's British audience and in their own public criticisms of Dickens. Foucault's description of visual power as a means to both isolate and discipline the object of the gaze seems to imply that there can never be a reciprocal exchange between the English and Americans, because they both seem to be objectifying the other.

In fact, many scholars see this 1842 American trip and the resulting cynicism as profoundly changing Dickens and his writing, because his hope and ideals concerning democracy were destroyed. However, it is more complicated than that, because there seems to be hope buried in the unconscious of his novel. Dickens may not have been able to bridge the gap between himself and America(ns), but after being on the receiving end of the objectifying gaze, he (perhaps unconsciously) realized that people always occupy both positions (subject and object). On the one hand, he viewed himself as a powerful, white, British male far above Americans, but on the other hand, his egalitarian ideals surface in his texts. The moments in *Martin Chuzzlewit* where reciprocity seems a possibility point towards a text that implies the one-way objectifying and disciplining

gaze is selfish and blind—even, as we can recognize even if Dickens did not, the author's own objectifying gaze.

Part of Dickens's visit to America included several tours of public institutions, where he inspected the practices of the administrators and the treatment of the inmates. Dickens seemed to assume a paternalistic and sympathetic position in regards to the inmates, who did not have the same freedoms as he did. Yet, when he visited the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind in Boston, he proved he understood that while having control of the gaze can be powerful, it can also be deceitful and hypocritical. He wondered what a social gathering would be like if people were unconscious of others' eyes, just as the blind always are. He hypothesized that sight causes hypocrisy and discontent, and the blind may not be as pitiful as one might imagine (Dickens, *AN* 40). Dickens acknowledged the social role the public gaze plays; meanwhile, in the very inspections where he made these observations, he held the controlling gaze.

Dickens utilized his own gaze to examine, share, and publish his observations; he made them public and thus influenced how his audience saw and interacted with Americans. It would be bad enough if Dickens simply criticized American institutions to an American audience, but when his audience included the British (the judgmental parental figure) it implies another level of discontent on the part of Americans. Beyond the inspections he did of institutions, Dickens exhibited a superior one-way vision when he observed the landscape and people in the rest of his tour. But he did not realize that his gaze inferred any kind of judgment; he claimed in his unpublished 1842 introduction to *American Notes* that it “is simply what it claims to be—a record of the impressions I

received from day to day” (Dickens, *AN* 275). As well, in the Pilgrim Letters, Dickens wrote in 1838, “As to my means of observation, they have been pretty extensive, I have been abroad in the world from a mere child, and have lived in London and travelled by fits and starts through a great part of England, a little of Scotland and less of France, with my eyes open” (qtd. in Berard 32). Here, Dickens claimed to be a traveler who looks with his “eyes open,” implying a willingness to accept and learn about what he sees. Yet, while traveling by train in America, he stated that “it was very pretty travelling thus” where one could observe families in their natural habitat, “we riding onward, high above them, like a whirlwind” (Dickens, *AN* 172). This quotation situated Dickens in the superior position, where the objects of his gaze were at a safe distance, and he could view them like interesting details in a landscape. Likewise, when several immigrants are put ashore along the Ohio River, Dickens watched them through a telescope/spy-glass until they were “mere specks to the eye” (Dickens, *AN* 179). The people appeared stunned and stood watching as the boat left them, but Dickens was not interested in meeting their looks or understanding their situation in any kind of real way. He only saw them through his glass, and while the scene was a poignant one, it was still intellectual curiosity and sympathy from a distance. He could feel sorry for them, but he did not see them as being equal to himself because he would never be so foolish as to settle on land so unappealing. As they followed the river, he described the settlers as watching the boat and looking “wistfully at the people from the world” as if discontented with their situation (Dickens, *AN* 178).

Dickens did not feel a connection with these ignorant immigrants, but neither could he feel sympathy towards a people who could own slaves. At one point, Dickens

pointed out the resemblance between his experience in America and Swift's Gulliver among the yahoos. In Richmond, Virginia, Dickens described the feeling of being in a slave state: "the darkness—not of skin, but mind—which meets the stranger's eye at every turn; the brutalizing and blotting out of all the fairer characters traced by Nature's hand . . . That travelled creation of the great satirist's brain, who fresh from living among horses, peered from a high casement down upon his own kind with trembling horror, was scarcely more repelled and daunted by the sight, than those who look upon some of these faces for the first time must surely be" (Dickens *AN* 154). In this instance, Dickens tried to equate his disconnection from fellow humans who felt it was appropriate to subjugate other humans with how Gulliver felt disconnected from humans after his time with the Houyhnhnms. But just as Gulliver seems blind to the ways the Houyhnhnms still participate in a kind of hierarchy and inequality, Dickens was blind to the ways he reinscribed a similar inequality in regards to the Americans.

In *American Notes* and briefly in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens visualized for the reader one of the great problems he found in America: slavery. When he visited America in the early 1840s, he spoke out against slavery both to individuals and in the public arena of *American Notes*. He noted horrible inequalities and violence in visual, government-sponsored signs, such as one stating the penalty for speeding over a bridge was five dollars for whites and fifteen stripes for slaves (Dickens, *Letters* 140).⁸⁵ However, despite his awareness of the degradations of slavery as a practice, he did not believe black slaves were equal to whites. Consequently, Dickens maintained his distance

⁸⁵ Letter to John Forster, 21 March 1842

as an observer and employed the objectifying one-way gaze despite his anti-slavery stance.

During his visit to New York, Dickens took a guided tour of the infamous Five Points, where he encountered destitute men and women living in squalor. The whole tour was an exercise in objectification, but in particular he found “heaps of negro women, waking from their sleep: their white teeth chattering, and their bright eyes glistening and winking on all sides with surprise and fear, like the countless repetition of one astonished African face in some strange mirror” (Dickens, *AN* 100). By conflating all the black women into one repeated image, Dickens negated any individuality among the women. In addition, he relied on visual stereotypes of African-Americans in which their teeth and eyes stood out in their dark faces. Yet, he also powerfully read the surprise and fear in the eyes of the women, whose place of residence was interrupted by a grotesque version of a tour—although it is unclear whether or not he realized he was a party to or part of the cause of that fear. Similar to his descriptions of the sparsely inhabited Midwest, Dickens described what he observed in terms of the effect on him and his eye; for example, he spoke of the “ruins [that] loom upon the eye” and the “loathsome, drooping, and decayed” atmosphere that abounded in this place (Dickens, *AN* 101). He did not really consider what such conditions meant for the people who lived there.

Dickens undoubtedly repeated many of the stereotypes of African-Americans at the time, framing black people (mostly men) as grinning, ignorant monkeys. When invited to witness a dance at “Almack’s,” Dickens observed a young black man dance, and Dickens described him as “making queer faces” and delighting the other black attendees, “who grin from ear to ear incessantly” (Dickens, *AN* 101). Similarly, in his

description of travel by stagecoach, he explained “the black drivers are chattering to them [the horses] like so many monkeys” (Dickens, *AN* 147). The driver of his particular coach was “a negro—very black indeed,” who had worn clothing and mismatched gloves and a poorly repaired whip, but “wears a low-crowned, broad-brimmed, black hat: faintly shadowing forth a kind of insane imitation of an English coachman!” (Dickens, *AN* 148). Dickens’s surprise that such an outlandish character reminded him of an English driver only proves his unquestioning attitude toward black-white inequality. I do not want to suggest that Dickens was immune to the horrible sights he was seeing; he did seem sympathetic and acknowledged the visual and structural racism at play in America. When traveling by train, Dickens explained that in the “negro car” there was a mother and her children who had just been purchased. He said, “The children cried the whole way, and the mother was misery’s picture” (Dickens, *AN* 151). Dickens then proceeded to describe the white slave owner as worse than the black cannibal in *Arabian Nights*. Dickens was certainly putting forth a moral judgment wherein the slaves had familial feelings (like white people) and the white slave owners were horrible human beings. Yet, even during his most affecting descriptions, he still maintained an aesthetic distance. He was equating the black mother to “misery’s picture,” making her a representation of human emotion rather than an individual suffering a particular problem. By turning her into a picture, he was able to analyze and watch her without the possibility of her looking back. In addition, the impulse with which Dickens unfavorably compared the white slave owner to a black cannibal makes sense, but that does not discount the fact that he blithely accepted the idea of a black cannibal as evil or subhuman. But while Dickens’s one-way gaze directed at slavery prevented him from engaging in any kind of reciprocal exchange

with black Americans, he did make it a visible critique. The fact is that Dickens chose to put slavery under his objectifying gaze and thus that of his audience.

Dickens also seemed to feel that the American landscape should have provided more entertainment and variety for the eye. He wrote to John Forster that it actually “pains the eye” to see such a miserable scene as that presented by the Ohio River with its “eternal swamp” and “unwholesome water” (Dickens, *Letters* 171).⁸⁶ Likewise, he put the inhabitants of the land, including slaves, in the same category of interesting features of the landscape. In a letter during his trip, Dickens said of the scenery, “it is the same thing over and over again . . . I dress up imaginary tribes of Indians, as we rattle on, and scatter them among the trees as they used to be—sleeping in their blankets, cleaning their arms, nursing brown children, and so forth. But saving an occasional log hut, with children at the door, or a slave house, or a white man with an axe and a great dog, long miles and miles are wholly destitute of life, or change of any kind” (Dickens, *Letters* 154).⁸⁷ Not only do we see Dickens’s boredom with the repetitive scenery but he imagined a more picturesque one with Native Americans, discounting the realities of both the land and native culture in favor of a more interesting prospect for the traveler. Dickens’s judgmental tone suggests that he was perfectly comfortable in the position of imperial public observer. However, Igor Webb argues that Dickens struggled generally with his position as the superior observer, finding instead “a storyteller for whom the observing or all-seeing eye of the narrator seems complicit in the unsavory and monolithic qualities of surveillance; a storyteller in the grip of a multifaceted crisis about authority” (Webb 61). Webb’s recognition of Dickens’s complicated position resonates

⁸⁶ Letter to John Forster, 28 Mar 1842

⁸⁷ Letter to Daniel Maclise, 22 Mar 1842

with his American texts, because while Dickens often utilized the powerful gaze that objectified whatever he saw, he also offered small moments and clues that he was perfectly aware of and ultimately disliked the selfish control he and other imperial men exercised. As I will discuss later, Martin's self-realization in *Martin Chuzzlewit* exemplifies the blindness that inevitably accompanies a one-way, objectifying gaze.

If "nineteenth-century readers perceived illustration as being crucial to Dickens's fiction," the illustrations accompanying the text of *Martin Chuzzlewit* also served to influence the way Dickens's audience saw unfamiliar others (Leighton 166). The pictures lining the walls of the Boz Ball are a good example of the ways in which Dickens's readers saw the visual as a part of the experience of reading Dickens. Similarly, eager readers waited impatiently outside booksellers' windows to catch a glimpse of the new etchings for *The Pickwick Papers* and read aloud lines from the text, to the pleasure of applauding bystanders (Leighton 168). Readers such as William Macready recorded seeing the image of Little Nell dead as he was reading the text leading up to the event, "I dread to read it" (Leighton 172).

Dickens chose the placement of the illustrations in the text, and as Robert L. Patten argues, the illustrations are not just a reflection of the text but an "integral, complexly dialogic, and essential feature" (122). This "dialogic" function of the images implies that Browne's images for *Martin Chuzzlewit* engage with Dickens's story as well as his instructions. The first number of *Martin Chuzzlewit* was published in December 1842 and continued monthly until June 1844, with Hablot Knight Browne providing all

of the illustrations.⁸⁸ Browne, otherwise known as Phiz, was one of Dickens's most successful writer-illustrator matches. Browne allowed Dickens to dictate the contents of most of the illustrations, and Dickens always requested drafts in order to make suggestions and approve them before publication. Jane R. Cohen explains that after several problems with illustrators, Dickens wanted to micromanage every aspect of his work. Thus, he “now took inordinate pains to specify what he wanted in the illustrations and to insure that he obtained the desired results” (Cohen 63). Dickens was fully aware of how important visuals could be to a text, and his own superb visual imagination gave him very clear ideas of what the plates should look like. Because Dickens gave such detailed contributions to his illustrators, examining the illustrations that go along with his narratives provides another medium through which to analyze the public gaze—especially since it is a visual medium.

In a letter he wrote in August 1843, Dickens described to Browne what the Eden plate for *Martin Chuzzlewit* should include, down to the smallest detail. He said Martin and Mark should be the “tenants of a wretched log hut,” which is located in “swampy, wretched forest” with a “filthy river running before the door.” This scene is awfully reminiscent of the one from Trollope's narrative, with Dickens simply adding his fictional characters to the scene—much as he did earlier with the imaginary native people spicing up his view. He went on to describe Martin as “the picture of hopeless misery” and homesickness. In contrast, Mark was to show “a face of unimpaired good humour” and was to represent “the only redeeming feature.” Everything else in the picture is

⁸⁸ Modern readers of Dickens's works may not be aware that many of the original illustrations may be missing. In fact, most editions of *Martin Chuzzlewit* do not include all the original illustrations; the 1998 Oxford UP paperback only included eight, for example, while the original text included twenty.

“utterly devoid of hope” (Dickens, *Letters* 542-543). Dickens’s instructions were so extensive that Browne could not include all of the details Dickens imagines as part of the scene. In a footnote to the letter, the editors note that Browne penciled in his reaction: “I can’t get all this perspective in—unless you will allow of a long subject—something less than a mile” (*Letters* 543). Not only is Dickens’s written description too comprehensive, but it also seems to preclude any imagination on Browne’s part. Yet, the novel’s illustrations are a result of Browne’s engagement with Dickens’s text and instructions.



The thriving City of Eden, as it appeared, in fact.

Figure 3.2: “The thriving City of Eden, as it appeared in fact” by Hablot Browne in Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit*

In the resulting image, Martin appears dejected and sick, much as Dickens intended, and one can also see Dickens’s hand in the general setting. Several details in Browne’s execution of Dickens’s instructions demonstrate an in-depth engagement with the text, however; he turned Dickens’s story into a visual narrative. For instance, Martin’s center position in the middle of the frame is a clue about his general importance in the story—it is primarily his story, after all. Likewise, Mark Tapley is on the margin of the frame, but in contrast to Martin, he appears strong and independent, with his hat still sitting cockily on his head. His axe-wielding and active body language juxtapose with Martin’s “hopeless misery” and inaction. But Tapley’s expression does not seem to follow Dickens’s suggestion that he be in a “good humour”; instead, he appears to be observing the general scene, including Eden and Martin, with wide-open eyes and a complete understanding of the dismal situation. Again, Browne seemed to have picked up on something Dickens may not have consciously intended but shows up in the text regardless. In his letter, Dickens (perhaps unknowingly) set up Mark as the exception to the rule; Mark is the “only redeeming feature” in a place “utterly devoid of hope.” Hence, for Dickens, Mark represented hope.

Several scholars have referred to Eden and/or America as Dickens’s heart of darkness,⁸⁹ and the unfamiliar swampy atmosphere and vulgar inhabitants do seem to have represented the opposite of civilization to Dickens. His description of Eden in

⁸⁹ See Igor Webb and Jerome Meckier.

Martin Chuzzlewit certainly reflected a kind of primordial landscape, with little hope for healthy growth:

A flat morass, bestrewn with fallen timber; a marsh on which the good growth of the earth seemed to have been wrecked and cast away, that from its decomposing ashes vile and ugly things might rise . . . where fatal maladies, seeking whom they might infect, came forth, at night, in misty shapes, and creeping out upon the water, hunted them like spectres until day; where even the blessed sun, shining down on festering elements of corruption and disease, became a horror. (Dickens, *MC* 325)

The portrayal of Eden here does not merely hint to the reader that Martin has been duped, and that his grand American dream is unlikely to come to fruition, but it also actively inspires fear with hints that he will die. The fact that modern scholars have seen Dickens's representation of America as a kind of Conradian heart of darkness also alludes to the racial connotations of the term as well. Modern readers would recognize the familiar way in which Dickens set up America's inferior otherness, in addition to referencing America's stubborn retention of slavery as an institutional practice.

The incongruity of Dickens's stance against slavery in *American Notes* and his use of stereotypes are further problematized in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. While Dickens included an entire chapter on slavery in *American Notes*, it exists very much on the periphery in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Sean Purchase argues that the novel utilizes the rhetoric of slavery to discuss Martin and Mark Tapley's relationship, specifically the master-slave

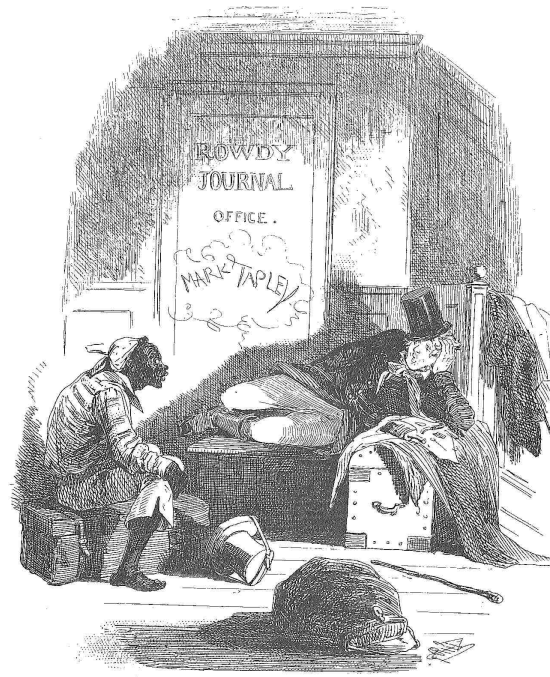
dialectic. The language of slavery is clear enough to Martin when he is speaking to Jefferson Brick and Colonel Diver, but he is blind to his own usage when clarifying his and Mark's position. When Jefferson Brick claims the word "master" is a remnant of the "depressing institutions of that British empire" and is never used in America, Martin snidely suggests they only use "owners" instead (Dickens, *MC* 228). However, Martin is oblivious (and not actually truthful) when declaring to Mark that they will no longer be "master and servant" (Dickens, *MC* 302). Thus, the novel suggests that while slavery may be rejected, the positioning of people in a superior or inferior arrangement is not. Dickens may have been against slavery, but that does not discount his racist assumptions or, in reference to his own country, his acceptance of a class hierarchy (whether he liked it or not). But Dickens deliberately situated Martin as being selfish for forgetting Tapley, despite Tapley's unequal status. The narrator explains, "It was characteristic of Martin, that all this while he had either forgotten Mark Tapley as completely as if there had been no such person in existence, or, if for a moment the figure of that gentleman rose before his mental vision, had dismissed it as something by no means of a pressing nature" (Dickens, *MC* 238). Martin's blindness here is plainly related to his selfishness.

In contrast to Martin, Mark Tapley spends his time demonstrating his compassion and interest in others of a lower status than him by listening to a slave's story. The "gray-haired black man" sat across from Mark and "star[ed] intently" at him, while Mark "returned the compliment" (Dickens, *MC* 241). This is a perfect example of the way that Mark allows and accepts the other's look. He seems perfectly comfortable in engaging in an exchange of looks, because he is interested in the other person. When Martin inquires after the man, Mark describes him as being "a man of colour," to which Martin asks

whether Mark thinks him “a blind man” since the man so obviously has a face that is the “blackest that ever was seen” (Dickens, *MC* 242). Mark’s euphemism here and after also seems to suggest a delicacy for the slave’s feelings and an awareness of the power such a label as “slave” has. But Martin does not understand this and instead assumes Mark is making fun of him or questioning his ability to recognize visual signs of identity, resulting in Martin falling back on the black man’s visual appearance as his defining characteristic. Mark responds by explaining that what he meant was that the man was “one of them as there’s picters of in the shops. A man and a brother” (Dickens, *MC* 242). Mark refers to the man as a slave by referring to the popular abolitionist advertisements of a kneeling female slave asking, “Am I not a woman and your sister?” He understands Martin’s desire for visual power/control, because he defines the slave again using a visual metaphor. At the same time, Mark also signals his awareness of abolitionist advertisements.

Mark then proceeds to tell the man’s story while admonishing Martin “don’t look at him, while I’m telling it” (Dickens, *MC* 242). Mark deliberately asks Martin to remove his objectifying gaze from the slave while he tells his story, implying that Mark has learned some of the things Mary Prince was trying to share. However, this move is problematic because the slave is not telling his own story, thus removing his agency at the same time as Mark is trying to protect it. And Mark even falls back on the common proof of veracity by claiming to have seen the slave’s scars: “The marks are on him” (Dickens, *MC* 242), but perhaps that is because he knows this is what is required for Martin to believe. Similarly, Dickens might have been suggesting that the only way Martin would accept information about slaves is from Mark rather than the slave himself

since Martin is not yet willing to engage in reciprocal exchanges with inferior others—he barely listens or sees Mark. Mark concludes by explaining how the man is now saving up to purchase “his own daughter, that’s all!” (Dickens, *MC* 242-3). This seems to reference the supremely unfair economic realities of slavery. Even Mark, however, turns the man into an object to be looked at when he declares that all he needs to be jolly is the possibility of looking at the slave once a day. Therefore, despite Mark representing the novel’s best hope for a reciprocal visual exchange, he still is only a product of Dickens’s imagination and thus a result of his prejudices.



Mr. Tapley succeeds in finding a jolly subject for contemplation

Figure 3.3: “Mr. Tapley succeeds in finding a jolly subject for contemplation” by Hablot Browne in Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit*

In the illustration (Figure 3.3), Browne established a hierarchy between Mark and the slave, because even though Mark is reclining he is still higher than the slave. But they are much closer to being on the same level, proving Browne inferred from Dickens's text that Mark is less interested in maintaining a superior position. Yet, there is still a distinct contrast between their dress, as evidenced by Mark's top hat and jacket versus the bare feet of the slave; these differences reflect the cultural hierarchy that white is superior to black, including in a socioeconomic position. Similarly, the title of the illustration claiming Mark has found "a jolly subject" implies that the subject in this case is slavery in the form of one particular former slave, which actually objectifies him; although, the irony of the title may mitigate this. Ultimately, though, Mark is the one character who consistently sees clearly and engages in a reciprocal look, as he is shown here exchanging looks with the slave. The image portrays the two men staring at one another, with Mark's casual posture suggesting he is comfortable with the situation and the slave's lean forward suggesting his active involvement, even enthusiasm. The clear reciprocity between Mark Tapley and the slave represents a moment of hope for a more egalitarian world. In this fictional moment, Dickens was able to move beyond his own blind spots and prejudices and present a reciprocal visual exchange between disparate people.

In addition, the scrawled signature of Mark Tapley is a declaration of existence/identity, which Dickens described as "looking very fresh and bold" (Dickens, *MC* 241). Although described as simply a way to pass the time while waiting on Martin, Mark's action seems to be a reaction against the traditional devaluation and objectification of the slave, who he is attempting to get to know on a more equal level. By signing his name, Mark asserts his own subjectivity, perhaps because he sees some

vague similarity in their lower positions in the social hierarchy and wants to resist objectification—particularly as he is being kept waiting by the insensitive Martin.

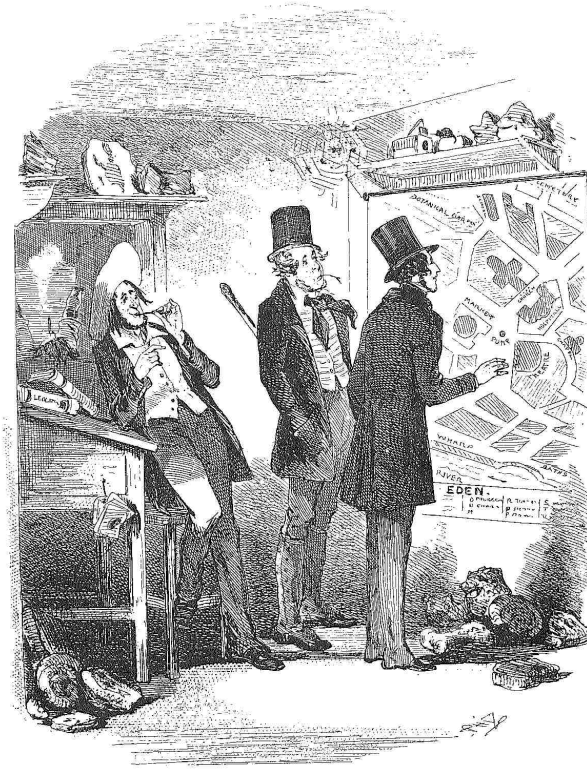
In addition to pointing out the inconsistency in a country declaring liberty for all and oppressing a whole race, the novel also points out the hypocrisy of believing in abolition at the same time as believing in the inequality of the races. The Norrises in *Martin Chuzzlewit* demonstrate the disconnection between claiming to be abolitionists and still thinking “the negroes were such a funny people; so excessively ludicrous in their manners and appearance” and “as ridiculous, physically, as the most grotesque of apes” (Dickens, *MC* 246). Unfortunately, Dickens was blind to the fact that he portrayed very similar images of blacks in his travel narration.

The irony is that although Dickens himself was often blind, he deliberately pointed out moments where people were being deceived by their observations. The best example of this is Martin’s blindness to the Eden scam in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Immediately upon entering the offices of the Eden settlement, Martin’s gaze is entirely taken up by the large plan of the city of Eden displayed on the wall. The narrator declares, “A flourishing city, too! An architectural city! There were banks, churches, cathedrals, market-places, factories, hotels, stores, mansions, wharves; an exchange, a theatre; public buildings of all kinds, down to the office of the Eden Stinger, a daily journal; all faithfully depicted in the view before them” (Dickens, *MC* 307). Martin tries to disguise his enthusiasm by “feigning to look more narrowly at the plan,” but he is sold upon the idea when Scadder “shows” where their cabin would be located on the map—in the middle of the wharf, but Martin is so dazzled by the extravagant visual representation that he does not notice. Meanwhile, Mark Tapley has “been eyeing the plan” and tries to

hint at the unlikelihood of the map and Scadder being truthful. But Martin quickly overrides him, and Mark realizes his role as a “sleeping partner—fast asleep and snoring”; he states, “*I see,*” demonstrating again his clarity of vision and understanding of the reality around him (Dickens, *MC* 308). In this instance, Mark sees Martin’s blindness and arrogant assumption that he knows better than Mark.

Nancy Aycock Metz argues that Dickens was deliberately emphasizing both Martin and Mark’s naivety. She says, “Nevertheless, unable or unwilling to see the application of the emigrant family’s fate to their own case, Martin and Mark blindly follow them to Eden, where the two travelers prove the old adage that those who remain willfully ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it. As Dickens dramatizes in the obstinate blindness of Martin and Mark, even the most naive of immigrants had likely heard something about the dangers of purchasing land sight unseen. Stories of the disasters associated with impulsive land purchases had long circulated, gathering currency and notoriety in the years before Dickens composed *Martin Chuzzlewit*” (Metz 53). She goes on to quote an emigrant’s guide by William Darby published in 1816 that states “With all the maps and descriptive works that can be procured, no emigrant ought ever to purchase land . . . before viewing the place where his purchases or settlements are to be made” (Darby 293 qtd. in Metz 53). Martin is the epitome of the naive and blind immigrant, but Dickens would have been very aware of such dangers. Jeremy Tambling explains that in 1839, Darius B. Holbrook came to London to raise money for the city he bought several years before, Cairo, Illinois—the inspiration for Eden. He came with a “Prospective View of the City of Cairo” prepared by William Strickland, which showed “the familiar grid pattern sandwiched between the two rivers; the picture he produced is

done in the customary older nineteenth-century style of rendering the city, showing a distance from it by letting it be viewed panoramically from the countryside” (Tambling 60). The plan showed a busy river and a settlement with a church and other buildings, including factories; this is obviously the kind of scheme that inspired the Eden episode and even the map that Martin is so taken by. Indeed, Dickens seems to have wanted to “prevent unskilled workers from uprooting their lives, only to discover greater misery thousands of miles away from home” like the unprepared settlers in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Moore 285). But Mark is not as blind as Martin; instead, he goes in with his eyes wide open. Even the illustration that accompanied the episode in the novel points to that assumption.



The thriving City of Eden, as it appeared on paper.

Figure 3.4: “The thriving City of Eden as it appeared on paper” by Hablot Browne in Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit*

The image depicts Martin as eagerly leaning forward and reaching out towards the glorious vision that is the “city” of Eden. We cannot see his eyes because they are fixed on the map, but Mark’s are wide open and worried. His skeptical attitude is obvious by his leaning back and keeping his hands in his pockets. Likewise, Scadder is smugly unconcerned while he watches his prey look at the map. Just as in previous plates, Martin and Mark stand in contrast to the Americans in their apparel, as both have top hats in opposition to Scadder’s country hat, thus marking them as both gentlemen and outsiders.

Martin is clearly seduced by the visual of the fake Eden, the chartered and labeled map somehow representing Truth; yet, he is blind to the hints that all is not as it seems, such as the cobweb in the corner.

Throughout Dickens's 1840s writings on America, the only person who has the wide-open eyes Dickens thinks he has is Mark Tapley. From the very beginning of the novel, Mark is portrayed as being a "shrewd observer" with a "clear and perfect insight into . . . Martin's character (Dickens, *MC* 200, 211). Mark does not engage in the same kind of one-way gaze that Dickens and Martin aspired to; instead, he is much more open to a reciprocal exchange of gazes with the people he meets. Perhaps this is because Mark is of a lower class, and hence does not have the same kinds of hierarchical ideologies to contend with, but since Dickens created him, it suggests a hope, however slim, for the future.

While on board the ship to America, Martin "seldom got up or looked about him," but Mark does and sees a hybrid collection of people (Dickens, *MC* 214). As Berard notices, "At first Martin sees himself as separate from the others on board the Screw and superior; he is the observer as Mark tends to the poor emigrant travelers" (Berard 158). Not only does Mark see the mix of English, Irish, Welsh, and Scottish people, but he sees and understands their positive aspects in the midst of poverty and illness. For instance, he "looked about him wistfully" and saw an old woman cradling a child, a woman taking care of several small children, old men attempting to do domestic tasks, and big men trying to help those around them through small "acts of tenderness" (Dickens, *MC* 214). In contrast, Martin refuses to go up on deck, where he might feel better with fresh air, because he does not want to be seen by the upper class people and subsequently judged as

equal to the other lowly steerage passengers. But it is important to recognize that the other people Mark interacts with are still ethnically similar (relatively) to the English, although there is still a divide—as demonstrated in my first chapter on *The Wild Irish Girl*. However, as I suggested earlier, it is even more difficult to imagine, even briefly, a visual exchange with black people and women.

When Mark later encounters some of their fellow passengers in Eden, he again immediately recognizes them and the situation they are in. Dickens writes, “Mark Tapley had an eye on all around him. The wan and meagre aspect of the family, the changed looks of the poor mother, the fevered child she held in her lap, the air of great despondency and little hope on everything, were plain to him, and made a deep impression on his mind. He saw it all as clearly and as quickly, as with his bodily eyes he saw the rough shelves supported by pegs . . . the flour-cask in the corner, serving also for a table . . . the damp that blotched the ground; or the crop of vegetable rottenness in every crevice of the hut” (Dickens, *MC* 444). Mark’s wide-open eyes allow him to see clearly the miserable circumstances this family is in. As opposed to Martin, who selfishly wallows in his own unfortunate situation, Mark looks beyond himself to see ways he can help others. And by treating others as equal human subjects, he is both a better person and inspires help in return. For it is this downtrodden family, who Martin condescended to, that provides Martin with what medicine they have—because of Mark.



Mr. Tapley is recognized by some fellow-citizens of Eden.

Figure 3.5: “Mr. Tapley is recognized by some fellow citizens of Eden” by Hablot

Browne in Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit*

In the plate that accompanied the episode, Mark’s eyes are again shown to be literally wide open, just as Dickens’s text implies that they are metaphorically open because he quickly understands the situation of these people. Moreover, Mark is again clothed in such a way as to label him an outsider, but this difference is mitigated by the fact that the children are enthusiastically climbing on him or reaching towards him. In return, Mark’s body language is open and he has his own hand outstretched to the family. In this scene, however, Mark (rather than Martin) is the object of Dickens-like recognition. The family immediately knows him, and all eyes are trained on him. The difference, of course, is that he looks back. He sees this struggling family and feels sympathy (and perhaps an ethical responsibility to help) for fellow human beings.

After Mark nurses Martin back to health, he falls ill himself, and Martin is forced into a revelation. As Martin starts to consider their relationship and who had been the better man, “the curtain slowly rose a very little way” and then “the curtain slowly rose a little more” and Martin saw how “Self, Self, Self” had guided all of his actions and blinded him. Soon Martin “saw distinctly” how horrible he had been and how his prejudices and selfish behavior had prevented him from truly accepting Mark as an equal (Dickens, *MC* 452). And though it takes Mark a little while to see Martin’s change of heart (and increased clarity of vision), he eventually “opened his eyes wide, in the dark” and saw how Martin had changed, again reinforcing Mark’s perceptiveness. Martin had made such a reversal, in fact, that as they are leaving Eden, Mark and Martin stood “side by side” and “They looked at one another” (Dickens, *MC* 456), implying they have reached a point where Martin acknowledges and accepts Mark enough to engage in a reciprocal visual exchange.

Dickens’s awareness of the public eye, both as utilized by him and directed towards him, seemed to mostly follow the one-way gaze of Foucault’s panopticon, where there is no possibility of an exchange or reciprocity. In fact, when Dickens spoke of buildings in newly built towns of New England, he seemed to be speaking metaphorically about that very thing: “Those slightly-built wooden dwellings behind which the sun was setting with a brilliant lustre, could be so looked through and through, that the idea of any inhabitant being able to hide himself from the public gaze, or to have any secrets from the public eye, was not entertainable for a moment” (*AN* 81-82). Dickens’s descriptions of America and its people and customs, such as slavery, are mostly seen through Dickens’s unidirectional gaze, with hardly any real interaction. However, there are moments where

Dickens's (or his fictional character Martin's) eye was blinded, leaving the impression that if he had been more open to an exchange the results would have been more positive—or at least accurate. Moreover, when that public gaze was reversed, and Dickens (or Martin) was the object of many eyes and speculation, he was suddenly thrust into a new position. This realignment of the gaze made him, if only briefly, aware of how he should have been seeing; he should have been looking with wide-open eyes like Mark Tapley. After the veil of selfishness is lifted from Martin's vision, he does seem to see more clearly. However, a couple hundred pages of the novel remain. Martin does seem generally to be a better, humbler man, and Mark still sees with more clarity than most. But once they return to England, racial differences are forgotten, women are still lesser (whether they are domestic goddesses or figures of ridicule), and the class hierarchy is upheld (Mark and his lady serve the Chuzzlewits et al.).

Most scholars who discuss Dickens's portrayal of 1840s America seem to agree that Dickens was disappointed and disillusioned by the failure of American egalitarianism. His more cynical attitude regarding humanity in general is even attributed to his realization that Rousseau's ideas about natural innocence and the general hope for the future was a sham, because America was supposed to be the representative Utopia—what could be but is not.⁹⁰ Dickens's own words seem to validate this, because he said despite the good qualities of Americans, he “would not live here, on any consideration. It goes against the grain with me. It would with you. I think it impossible, utterly

⁹⁰ For example, Meckier argues, “America failed to corroborate Rousseau's idea of a more innocent past and Victorian forecasts of a glittering tomorrow; this double letdown was largely responsible for Dickens's increasing negativity, which turned the later fictions . . . into ever gloomier dystopian pronouncements” (2).

impossible, for any Englishman to live here, and be happy” (Dickens, *Letters* 135).⁹¹ Jane Berard even argues that Martin’s recovery “most assuredly is not a foreshadowing of future hopeful possibilities” (Berard 156). But at the same time, she also claims that “Dickens notes that in Eden there is no such distinction between class, race, or gender, no power relations within capitalism . . . In this inverted landscape of the ‘other,’ all exist together regardless of who they are . . . what Dickens has constructed is a deliberate and conscious union between classes” (Berard 163). I contend that it is this “inverted landscape” of America where Mark can exchange looks with traditionally inferior others and Martin and Dickens learn what it is to be objectified that *does* provide room for hope.

In the first chapter, I showed how Owenson challenged the traditional power hierarchy between men and women and British and Irish by allowing her fictional characters to engage in a visual exchange. Owenson herself crossed national lines as a daughter of mixed heritage, and she also became a successful writer. However, she was also perfectly cognizant of the ongoing prejudices and inequalities in her world; thus, she used the fictional medium of a novel to portray how a happy reciprocity can be achieved if one is willing. The happily-ever-after of the novel is, of course, only possible because it is fiction. Mary Prince and her personal narrative demonstrate that a visual exchange and reciprocity are much more difficult to achieve in the real world. In fact, Prince’s attempts at a visual exchange have to be mediated through her story, because when the actions were taking place, it was nearly impossible for white people, specifically slave owners, to see her as a subject capable of a look of her own. With this third chapter, we have examples of both personal narrative and fiction from Charles Dickens. In the personal

⁹¹ Letter to John Forster, 15 Mar 1842

narrative, a visual exchange is not possible, because despite Dickens's sympathetic leanings, he maintained his panoptical vision of domination. It is only in his fiction that we see some hope for a visual exchange and reciprocity; but even then, the hope lays with Mark Tapley, a lower-class man. Yet, the fact that Dickens reached such a large audience with his fiction perhaps suggests that he was inadvertently influencing a huge number of people to consider seeing in the Mark Tapley way. In the last chapter, we will see how Olive Schreiner's fictional story demonstrates an even larger gap between disparate people but still manages to provide glimpses of hope.

CHAPTER 4: “Because we are before your eyes you never look at us”: Blindness and Insight in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*

“We must see the first images which the external world casts upon the dark mirror of his mind [. . . in order to] understand the prejudices, the habits, and the passions that will rule his life.”
Alexis de Tocqueville⁹²

“A child sees everything, looks straight at it, examines it, without any preconceived idea; most people, after they are about eleven or twelve, quite lose this power, they see everything through a few preconceived ideas which hang like a veil between them and the outer world.”⁹³
Olive Schreiner

The beginning of Olive Schreiner’s 1883 novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, is entitled “The Watch,” and immediately locates the story and the two protagonists within a visually saturated landscape. “The Watch” refers to the African moon, which acts as a giant eye illuminating the landscape and people in a white light. The text describes the light as initially touching the vast African plain with its milk-bushes and rocky hills, emphasizing its exoticism, its “weird and . . . oppressive beauty”(1). For Schreiner’s readers, who would have been primarily British, this landscape would have indeed been exotic and unreal.⁹⁴ However, the moonlight illuminates the innocent landscape but falls on structures, such as the homestead containing the animal pens, native-servant housing, and the main house, tainted by social inequalities. Only then do we follow the moon inside the farmhouse to the sleeping inhabitants, including the child Lyndall, who is described as belonging to the moonlight with her “elfin-like beauty” (2). The narrator situates Lyndall as different, with her otherworldly beauty, and at the same time suggests

⁹² Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Trans. Stephen D. Grant. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000. Print.

⁹³ Letter to Havelock Ellis, 18 July 1884

⁹⁴ Schreiner published her novel in England.

she can be owned. Yet, Lyndall does not meekly acquiesce: “the moonlight looked in at the naked little limbs. Presently she opened her eyes and looked at the moonlight that was bathing them . . . Then she drew the cover from the floor, turned her pillow, and pulling the sheet over her head, went to sleep again” (2). Thus, from the very beginning of the novel, Lyndall reacts to being gazed at.⁹⁵ In fact, Lyndall does not just passively receive the moon’s light; she actively opens her eyes to see for herself and returns the moonlight’s gaze. She asserts her own power and subjectivity in some small way through her own look and her resulting action. She chooses to reject the moon’s gaze and pulls the cover over her head as a type of veil, preventing the moonlight from continuing to observe her. This seemingly inconsequential scene suggests Lyndall’s early understanding of the politics of the visual and that the look will be central to this novel.

On the other hand, in the next paragraph the reader is introduced to Waldo who is in complete darkness, where “nothing was visible,” not even Waldo (3). In contrast to Lyndall, the moon does not penetrate into his space, rather Waldo exists in his own dark world where imagination rules. With “his eyes wide open,” he imagines he sees a long line of people heading towards death, and his imaginative reaction to his fear of death remains with him. Throughout the novel, Waldo is preoccupied with a desire to know and see (with his wide open eyes, he is similar to Dickens’s Mark Tapley), but he is unable to

⁹⁵ In this scene, the moonlight is “loving,” and the verbs Schreiner uses to describe its actions, “illuminate,” “bathe,” “etherealize,” conjure magic and positive feelings. Yet, the moonlight also “fell in a flood,” suggesting it was unstoppable. At the same time, it “hid defects” in Em’s appearance, which seems benign on the surface but hints at the importance of appearance and beauty for women—especially when Em is immediately juxtaposed with Lyndall.

do so for he is blinded by the darkness and often invisible himself.⁹⁶ In contrast, Lyndall constantly must react to her hypervisibility, objectification.

Yet the moon is not the only watcher, because the reader also takes the point of view of a watcher. This initial scene in the novel trains the reader by guiding his or her eye through the fragmented landscape, structures, and characters' minds, emphasizing how focusing on the visual can reveal important facets of Schreiner's setting and characters. But Schreiner's exotic landscape of colonial South Africa is foreign and unfamiliar, and almost a character in itself, which is highlighted by her descriptions of the hillock that is like "some giant's grave" and the plants' humanized "arms" and "fleshy leaves" (1). The alien nature of the setting, along with preconceived ideas and prejudices, can create a veil or mist between the reader's understanding and the story, so the narrator takes on the role of guide for the reader, pointing out blind spots and revealing moments of clarity. The moon's watch is followed by the sun's, where the farm is "seen by daylight" and the eye aches (4). The visual language and description is repeated throughout the novel, characterizing the narration as particularly interested in the visual.

But Schreiner provided even earlier interactions with the reader that prepare for the intersection of vision, gender, and empire. In the preface, Schreiner imagines human life as a stage where "men appear, act and re-act upon each other" (xxxix). But she revises Shakespeare's famous metaphor about people being merely players upon a stage

⁹⁶ Throughout the rest of the chapter, I will refer to Waldo's semi-invisibility. He is not Ellison's invisible man, whose presence is negated because of his race. But he does share some similarities with other marginalized peoples whose presence is often ignored by the mainstream.

by situating herself as the painter presenting the story to spectators/readers.⁹⁷ Schreiner also acknowledged how “far removed” and “[un]familiar” her story will seem to her British readers (xxxix). Yet she also rejected the idea of portraying South Africa as some sort of colonial adventure story; instead, she chose to present the non-idealized reality of life on a South African farm in shades of “grey,” proving her awareness of how complicated vision—and life—is towards the end of the nineteenth century.

In this chapter, I analyze moments in Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* where vision, gender, and empire intersect. Waldo and Lyndall have a strong connection that allows them to sympathize with one another’s feelings, but they can never return to childhood when they could understand the other and engage in a reciprocal exchange of looks, in which each accepts and returns the look of the other, acknowledging and understanding each other’s unique subjectivity. The fact that the text makes us desire a visual exchange between Lyndall and Waldo, though, suggests a hope for the changing and growing worldview. Ultimately, I posit that, as in the other texts I have examined, Schreiner had hope that we can connect with others, and she took on the task of trying to find a way for her readers to see and act in reciprocal, egalitarian ways. However, unlike in the other texts, Schreiner’s does not lead to a happy ending, implying that such a connection is still beyond the veil.

The first of the above epigraphs to this chapter is taken from de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*,⁹⁸ which discusses the growth and development of nations. This particular comment relates to de Tocqueville’s idea that by examining the origins of a

⁹⁷ Schreiner obviously is mixing metaphors here, but it is significant that she chooses the term paint, which implies a visual medium.

⁹⁸ Tocqueville’s narrative *may* have been one Dickens read before his trip to America.

nation, similar to the origins of men, we can gain insight into its society and laws. He used America as his prime example because when he visited America it was recently independent and so was easily observable, and he points to several ideas (ranging from Puritanism to slavery to republicanism) that influenced the overall character of America. In 1883, Olive Schreiner included it as the introductory epigraph for *The Story of an African Farm*, suggesting that she found his ideas particularly compelling and relevant to her novel. Critics have since theorized that Schreiner uses her characters to make broader points about the development of the nations of South Africa and England, too.⁹⁹ I suggest that Schreiner chose the quote for its relationship to the way images received as a child, “images which the external world casts,” affects the adult. De Tocqueville believes it is the images and words that a child first encounters that influence adult beliefs and prejudices, but Schreiner locates these defining ideas much later in a child’s life, around the age of 11 or 12 years.

What Schreiner references in the second epigraph I quote at the beginning of the chapter is the Romantic idea that children are closer to the noumena and see more clearly because of their innocence. However, as they get older, they lose this connection and clear vision through interaction with the world, which creates a veil, and no matter how hard they try, they can never return or break through the veil. From Kant to Shelley, this was a popular Romantic idea.¹⁰⁰ Schreiner was very well read and would have been familiar with these writers, but she was also very much influenced by the American

⁹⁹ See Joseph Bristow.

¹⁰⁰ Schreiner specifically mentions Shelley when she makes this comment in a letter. Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” is a great example of the adult who no longer sees in the same way he did as a child.

Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson.¹⁰¹ In 1849, he echoes the idea of childlike clarity of vision in *Nature* when he posits that only the child (or the man-child) can truly see nature: “To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood” (7). Emerson’s man-child with an affinity for nature is particularly relevant in regards to Schreiner’s Waldo, and we will return to this quotation, but the idea that a person’s vision changes as he or she grows older and learns more of the world represents one of Schreiner’s core beliefs as a British South African woman and one that is imbedded in her work. Just in that first scene from the novel, Schreiner sets up not just how South Africa is altered by man and man’s vision but how the two children’s personalities are being shaped by their visual encounters. The children are, in fact, at the crucial age of 11 or 12 and occupy that liminal position between child and adult, so their experiences are especially important in forming their future beliefs and practices. Schreiner’s novel certainly reflects in some ways the negative associations with this changing vision. On the other hand, she hints that perhaps there could be a new way of seeing, not the ignorant innocence of the child or the prejudiced solipsism of the adult but an accepting hybrid vision. The fact that Schreiner’s protagonists are colonial children can also relate to the metaphor I discussed in the last chapter, in which the colonized territory is a kind of child to the parental colonizing

¹⁰¹ Her chosen pseudonym for the first publication of the novel was *Ralph* Irons and her main male character’s name is *Waldo*, but more to the point is evidence that she bought Emerson’s *Essays* in 1874. (Bristow)

nation; but it is clear that once again, this metaphor becomes unstable for the child may grow up and challenge the traditional hierarchy of power.

Previous chapters illustrate the ways in which visual culture (such as exhibitions and illustrations) influenced how knowledge was transmitted and how the British people saw difference. By the time Olive Schreiner wrote *The Story of an African Farm*, she was already irreparably influenced by a culture that privileged the visual. In a letter from 1886, Schreiner declares, “The press is manifestly becoming the governing and ruling power,” demonstrating her awareness of how the press, with its increasing number of illustrations and expansion of topics, formed societal and cultural norms.¹⁰² British periodicals such as *The Illustrated London News* were easily accessible in South Africa, thereby furthering British beliefs and practices in regards to gender and empire despite a vast geographic distance.¹⁰³ In addition, she herself frequently made reference in her letters to sending and receiving photographs. Because she started work as a governess at the young age of 15, and the South African landscape was not conducive to quick travel, she was separated from her immediate family for most of her life. Thus, she and her family would routinely exchange photographs of one another, using at least in part visual images as a means of maintaining a connection. According to Patricia Di Bello, “Photographic portraits were precious, especially to women, because ‘the sense of nearness involved in the thing’ would allow the bonds of love to fill any artistic or technical limitations” (88). According to the *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, photography was introduced to Africa, particularly South Africa, by

¹⁰² Letter to Karl Pearson, 23 October 1886

¹⁰³ There would, of course, be other ideologies at practice in Africa. However, the onslaught of British visual culture would certainly spread British beliefs in both obvious and covert ways.

European travelers by late 1839. There were approximately forty photographic studios in South Africa by 1861. Photography was used by adventurers and travelers, missionaries, and colonial administrators. Missionaries used lantern slideshows of photographic images as a pedagogical tool to show the rewards of conversion. Meanwhile, albums depicting engineering feats showed an idealized picture of the European presence in Africa. By the 1880s, photography had also become a hobby, inspiring many women to form camera clubs and create multi-media family albums.

The children, Lyndall and Waldo, both lose their innocent vision (to varying degrees) and connection to one another as they grow older and succumb to the influences of cultural prejudices and beliefs. Their vision becomes increasingly misty and veiled, creating blind spots and reinforcing a solipsistic view of life. Gendered veils make clarity of vision and a visual exchange impossible for Lyndall in her position as a proto-New Woman. As she grows older, the fact that women perceive their identities through their appearance and are continually objectified angers Lyndall. The irony is that despite her awareness of how vision is used as a tool by society to keep women caged, she is not always conscious of the way it works on other marginalized groups. Her struggle to escape the hegemonic power structure that reinforces the gendered subject/object binary blinds her to the native cultures around her who are similarly objectified (albeit in different ways). Schreiner was known just as much for her political involvement in South Africa and its policies on native peoples as she was for her feminist sympathies, and it is probable that she would not have consciously overlooked native people.¹⁰⁴ In fact, Waldo

¹⁰⁴ Most scholars now acknowledge that Schreiner was at least unconsciously aware of racial issues in *SAF*, but few see it as deliberate. See Liz Stanley, Susan Horton, or Bart Moore-Gilbert.

represents, as much as he can while still being a white male, the other to whom Lyndall is blind. If Schreiner deliberately points out the gaps in a New Woman's vision—that by focusing solely on her own situatedness the New Woman is blind to others—then Waldo is the other side of the coin as an othered male whose lower social class and marginal position partially connects him to the native people but is in turn blind to the plight of women.

The eye, however, is inevitably connected to the “I.” Identities are defined by the characters' perceptions of the world around them. Lyndall's perception of herself, as well as her feelings about the inequality of women, is inevitably connected to how others view her. In the same way, Waldo's perception of himself is connected to his imagination, faith, and nature. Because Waldo is a man, he automatically has more choices and more freedom than the female Lyndall. Because he knows he can always find a job somewhere and that he can travel alone at his own will, he can retain his naïve dreams of childhood and focus on more imaginative, abstract ideas. Meanwhile, Lyndall's childish dreams are replaced by a bitter realism because of her sense of a lack of freedom and choice. However, just as the eye has trouble making sense of fragmented sight, the characters have trouble making sense of their positions in the world.

The narrator of *The Story of an African Farm* suggests that the only way to find order in the chaos that is the “I” is to view it in hindsight. It is impossible to see our position as we are living it for we can only make order of the past—particularly of the dead past. The narrator explains, “It is not till the past has receded many steps that before the clearest eyes it falls into co-ordinate pictures. It is not till the “I” we tell of has ceased to exist that it takes its place among other objective realities, and finds its true niche in

the picture. The present and the near past is a confusion, whose meaning flashes on us as it slinks away into the distance” (135). Thus, the characters in the novel are forced to find their way through the obscure, chaotic world without hope of gaining clarity until they become different people and can look back at their past actions or are on the verge of dying. For Waldo and Lyndall, it is the latter, because as Joshua Esty argues, they are “frozen youth” whose “symbolic maturity is deferred” (423). This deathbed reflection and clarity of vision is similar to what occurs to Martin Chuzzlewit, who suddenly realizes how selfish he has been and reevaluates his position in the world. But, I argue that the characters also need to acknowledge their positions as both subjects and objects (not just one or the other). For Schreiner’s characters, this clarity still only accounts for an understanding and clear vision of the self. It does not mean clarity of vision when looking at others. The outer world blinds them with preconceived ideas and prejudices about gender and race, but their blindness provides the reader with insight into these gaps and prejudices. I argue that, for Schreiner, these two characters together represent the potentiality of the evolution of human beings and a hybrid world, where lines of social division are blurred and vision is no longer objectifying and alienating but reciprocal and accepting/inclusive.

Olive Schreiner’s novel takes place on a South African farm run by a Boer (Dutch/Afrikaner) woman, Tant Sannie, until her English stepdaughter Em inherits it after Tant Sannie’s death. But the story primarily focuses on the lives of Waldo, the son of the German overseer, and Lyndall, Em’s orphaned female cousin. We follow the two children as they move from what the Victorians thought was the clear, unquestioning vision of innocence, where they have a clear connection to one another, to the veiled,

troubled vision of adulthood, where Schreiner seems to acknowledge the idea that one can only truly know oneself. Society impacts and ultimately prevents the ability to truly connect with and understand other people. Lyndall goes to school, has an affair with a man who imposes his will on her, gets pregnant, briefly returns to the farm before leaving again, and dies shortly after giving birth to her baby, who also dies. Waldo stays on the farm awhile after his father dies, but he is mistreated and eventually leaves to see the world. He is disillusioned and returns to the farm, and when he learns Lyndall has died he dies as well. Significantly, Lyndall and Waldo both die when they have barely reached adulthood and therefore never achieve their potential nor do they completely move out of that liminal space into irrevocable adulthood.

The Story of an African Farm is seen through multiple eyes, including the omniscient narrator and various characters' perceptions, and one scene is even seen through the viewpoint of the pet dog. The combination of all the 'eyes' and different genres (novel/allegory/dream vision) actually prevents the novel from achieving any kind of normative unity, which perhaps is a result of Schreiner writing the novel over a span of sixteen years. But the fact that she was a British South African writing an African story for a British audience undoubtedly influenced the disjointedness and fragmentariness of the story as well. Schreiner's realization that there are multiple ways to see the world circles back around to *The Wild Irish Girl* and its hybridity, which prepares the reader for the blurring of traditional boundaries and the challenge to hierarchies.

Throughout, the novel encourages the reader to sympathize and identify with Lyndall and Waldo.¹⁰⁵ The reader *wants* Lyndall and Waldo to connect and be together. This is not to say that Lyndall and Waldo have any kind of sexual connection; nor does the text imply that they should. However, I would argue that Schreiner believed they were two halves of the same coin or, in other words, soul mates. Joseph Bristow describes them as “twin brother and sister” with the strongest bond in the book (xii). This bond is articulated in the first chapter when the children are playing hide-and-seek. Waldo is distracted because he is still obsessing about death and so is easily found by the girls. When Em mistakenly chides him for sleeping, Lyndall looks at him and clearly understands that he is upset and had been crying. The clarity and connection between the two does not last, but there is still a strong bond because of their *desire* for it and they remain preternaturally close despite geographic or social distance. In the final section of the book, Waldo writes to the already dead Lyndall and shares his thoughts and feelings. When he is informed of her death, he seems to retreat from life and dies not long after. Despite their differences, Waldo cannot survive long in a world that does not contain Lyndall.

Both Waldo and Lyndall’s understanding of the world and its people is shaped by the visual culture of England and South Africa, which contributes to the fragmentation and inequality of their gazes. In his introduction to the Oxford edition of *The Story of an African Farm*, Joseph Bristow suggests, “For Lyndall, at least, her close friendship with

¹⁰⁵ After publication of the novel, Schreiner received many letters from readers who claim they saw themselves in her different characters. She claims, “I have got scores, almost hundreds of letters about it from all classes of people, from an Earl’s son to a dressmaker in Bond Street, and from a coalheaver to a poet.” Letter to Karl Pearson, 23 October 1886

Waldo transcends gender” (xii). This statement is too strong, because while they may not see each other in a sexual way, their genders are very important, especially in relation to their understanding and experience of the world. For Schreiner, if gender is constructed by social and cultural forces and within this context men and women have different roles and freedoms, how can their vision possibly coincide? Waldo, as a man, grows up knowing that he has at least some freedom to pursue his interests (although complicated and limited, of course, by his economic position), while Lyndall, as a woman, grows up knowing her dreams are contingent on her appearance.

One of the most telling moments in the novel occurs in the shadow of native rock paintings. The two girls, Lyndall and Em, sit under a shelving rock, “on the surface of which were still visible some old Bushman-paintings, their red and black pigments having been preserved through long years from wind and rain by the overhanging ledge: grotesque oxen, elephants, rhinoceroses, and a one-horned beast, such as no man has ever seen or ever shall” (10). The narrator sees the paintings as fantastic and “grotesque”; Deborah Shapple argues that Schreiner’s representations of the Bushman paintings connect to Ruskin’s idea of the grotesque, in which “the grotesque denotes an aesthetic of fragmentation and incongruous juxtapositions” (93). This fits nicely with Schreiner’s fragmented text as well as the juxtaposition between how Lyndall and Waldo perceive their surroundings.

The two girls, Lyndall and Em, who are twelve years old at this point—the age Schreiner mentions as being transitional for vision, sit with their backs to the paintings, and Lyndall looks at an ice-plant leaf, seeing it as a diamond. Lyndall perceives her little diamond ice plant as ornamentation and representative of what she will have and

accomplish one day; she declares, “When I am grown up, there will be nothing that I do not know. I shall be rich, very rich; and I shall wear not only for best, but everyday, a pure white silk, and little rose-buds, like the lady in Tant’ Sannie’s bedroom, and my petticoats will be embroidered, not only at the bottom, but all through” (12). Lyndall wants to look like the lady, to be considered pretty and rich, as evidenced by what she wears and how she appears to others. This diamond ice plant demonstrates Lyndall’s childish innocence in looking at the world and its beauty, but it is not an untainted image because it also exemplifies a girl child’s early exposure to a woman’s role through fashion plates and illustrations. Lyndall already seems to realize how important appearances are and how a person’s identity depends on how the culture constructs his/her role. In this scene, Lyndall’s changing vision begins; her imaginative play is influenced and fragmented by cultural beliefs about women and beauty.

Yet, this is not the only set of beliefs fragmenting her vision. For Schreiner, Lyndall’s vision has specific political implications for South Africa as well. Diamond mining represented “the centre of South African economic, social and political life” (Ross 54). Diamonds were found on the banks of the Vaal River in 1867, and Schreiner spent some time at the diamond fields of New Rush, where she lived with her brothers in 1873-4. In letters to her friend Catherine Findlay, she revealed that she liked the fields at the same time that she continually admitted her brothers had no luck finding diamonds. But there was always the hope that they would find a “big one,” as evidenced by a story she tells of going to see a 159-carat diamond a man found. Embedded in that hope is the promise her brother made to send her to an American college to study.¹⁰⁶ So not only do

¹⁰⁶ Letters to Catherine Findlay, 1873

diamonds represent economic success, but they also represent Schreiner's dream to study abroad and obtain an education. In addition, according to Robert Ross, "The development of the diamond fields . . . intensified the distinction between skilled white labour and unskilled black labour" (56).¹⁰⁷ Thus, just as diamonds fragment light they also represent a variety of fragmented beliefs, from beauty to economic and social class to race.



Figure 4.1: "Paris Fashions for March" in *The Illustrated London News* (March 1862)

But the diamond is not the only visual object at play in Lyndall's imagination; there is also the illustration of the fashionable lady in Tant Sannie's bedroom. Figure 5.1 would be an approximation of the fashion sheet Lyndall and Em admire in Tant Sannie's bedroom. It is from the March 1862 issue of the *Illustrated London News*, a periodical

¹⁰⁷ Waldo later becomes a transport driver taking loads to and from the diamond fields, and once again he falls into the gap between skilled white labor and unskilled black labor.

that we know was available to Schreiner and other South Africans because the character Gregory Rose plasters his walls with its illustrations later in the novel.¹⁰⁸ The sheet, presumably like those Gregory papers his wall with, is fragmented due to its separation from its original holistic setting in the magazine. The figure in the foreground is in a white tulle gown decorated with bouquets of flowers; but what is so striking to modern observers is the inefficacy of such a garment. The impossibly tiny waists and the elaborate skirts promote a vision of womanhood that is purely ornamental. In the illustration, there are only three women sitting or standing in various positions. The women are gazing on each other, with no men in the picture, which was the typical structure of those kinds of illustrations in *ILN*. The overt audience is women, who are interested in the latest fashions, but implied is the cultural gaze that is usually gendered male. These illustrations emphasize the hypervisibility of women as desirable, consumable objects.

Patrizia Di Bello explains that illustrations in women's magazines "constructed ideals and meanings" of femininity. While women rarely represented these meanings in real life, the images did represent the desirable woman as a kind of currency, which then "women could use to construct and represent their own identity" (Di Bello 55). As a child, Lyndall does exactly that; she constructs her (future) identity on the model presented by the fashion plate. She positions the "lady" as an ideal she wishes to achieve someday. However, women were not "simply passive consumers of goods and values

¹⁰⁸ See *SAF*, Part Two, Chapter 11, "Gregory Rose finds his Affinity": "Presently he rose and went into his house. It was one tiny room, the whitewashed walls profusely covered with prints cut from the 'Illustrated London News,' and in which there was a noticeable preponderance of female faces and figures." Gregory, who jilts Em for Lyndall, himself epitomizes the objectifying gaze at the same time he is further fragmenting women by cutting these sheets out and making them wallpaper.

imposed on them by a male dominated culture” (Di Bello 55). Many Victorian women certainly reflected the domestic discourses produced by visual culture, but they learned how to use that same discourse to achieve their own ends. As Lyndall grows older, she certainly is not a passive consumer. She achieves the fashionable beauty she desires as a child and wields it like a weapon over men, but she realizes it is at the expense of both her physical and intellectual freedom.

Despite her early exposure to the idea of woman as visual object, Lyndall fights against the inevitable and imagines that education is the thing that will allow her to leave the farm and achieve greatness. For Lyndall, greatness means independence (both economic and sexual), knowledge, and power.¹⁰⁹ So when she discovers that her boarding school will only teach her superficial nonsense, she “made them give [her] a room,” foreshadowing Virginia Woolf’s “room of one’s own.” Lyndall educates herself through reading and writing and meeting new people. But as she grows older and becomes more acquainted with the world outside the farm, she also learns that her beauty will do more for her than knowledge. She complains, “The less a woman has in her head the lighter she is for climbing” (155). In essence, her beauty has been fragmented from the rest of her and is forced to represent the whole. Lyndall goes on to explain that the sheltered existence of girl children transfers to that of adult women:

Afterwards we go and thread blue beads, and make a string for our neck; and we go and stand before the glass. We see the complexion we were not to spoil, and the white frock, and we look into our own great eyes. Then the curse

¹⁰⁹ Napoleon Bonaparte is one of Lyndall’s role models.

begins to act on us. It finishes its work when we are grown women, who no more look out wistfully at a more healthy life; we are contented. (155)

This internalized discipline imposed on women's vision angers Lyndall because women perceive their identities through their appearance and are taught to focus solely on that aspect of sight through cultural documents such as fashion advertisements. To Lyndall, women are taught by society to be content with making their appearance more attractive for viewing by others, thus giving up a healthier life. As John Berger argues, women are aware of the male gaze, and this awareness affects all of their relationships, including their sense of self. A woman internalizes the male gaze, thus turning herself into an object, "particularly an object of vision" (Berger 47). Schreiner suggests this very thing, that women internalize the male gaze so that eventually their subjectivity is more about being attractive objects than anything else. Lyndall no longer sees the fashionable woman from the illustration as a representation of riches and power but rather as a "curse," as a veil imposed by society that prevents her from seeing her position in the world clearly. She is critiquing the culturally constructed male gaze that influences women's visual practices and ultimately subjugates them.

At several points in the novel, Lyndall gives long impassioned speeches about the various ways women are caged. Specifically, she worries about the future of a world where the mother-educators are not allowed to "see" anything; she asserts, "The lawyer may see no deeper than his law books, and the chemist see no further than the windows of his laboratory, and they may do their work well. But the woman who does woman's work needs a many-sided, multi-form culture; the heights and depths of human life must

not be beyond the reach of her vision . . . We bear the world, and we make it” (159-160). Women raise the children, but they are not taught in such a way as to make the education they pass on useful. This argument is the same one that Mary Wollstonecraft made almost a century before, an argument of which Schreiner would have been well aware. In fact, Schreiner intended to write an introduction to a new edition of Mary Wollstonecraft, but she never finished it.¹¹⁰ What her letters reveal is that she held many of the same views as Wollstonecraft in regards to educating women to cultivate their reason and will, and only by “changing a whole system” can men and women stop injuring one another. In a letter, Schreiner contends, “we cannot hate any one. Man injures woman and woman injures man. It is not a case for crying out against individuals or against sexes, but simply for changing a whole system. When we have pure strong mothers able [to] see the beauty and importance of the sexual side of life, we will have pure strong men able to guide themselves nobly. Before that day comes women will have to have made themselves absolutely free of material dependence on men, their reasons and their wills will have to be cultivated.”¹¹¹ The fact that woman’s situation has not changed much since Wollstonecraft disturbs both Schreiner and Lyndall. As Lyndall asks, “Do they see nothing, understand nothing?” (161).

¹¹⁰ Schreiner writes, “I am going to write a preface to Mary Wollstonecraft if they will let me say just what I want to say” (Letter to Karl Pearson, 10 May 1886). Then, two days later she explains, “What I have to say of Mary Wollstonecraft is not to excuse her and not even to *justify* her; but to show that her greatness lay in this, her view with regard to marriage; and her action with regard to it. That she is the greatest of English women because she saw a hundred years ago with regard to sex and sex relationships what a few see today, and what the world will see in three hundred years’ time” (Letter to Karl Pearson, 12 May 1886). The fragments of the fifteen-page manuscript of Schreiner’s introduction to Wollstonecraft are in the Settler’s Museum at Grahamstown.

¹¹¹ Letter to Karl Pearson, 19 July 1885

When Lyndall returns to the farm after being away for several years, Lyndall's previous "I"/ "eye" has ceased to be: "Her eyes ran over the familiar objects. Strange to go away for four years, and come back, and find that the candle standing on the dressing table still cast the shadow of an old crone's head . . . She looked about among the old familiar objects; all was there, but the old self was gone" (149). Her childhood identity and all her dreams of gaining knowledge and power have faded, and Lyndall's perceptions are now entangled with her current "I," which is embittered by her position as a woman. But with her quest for education, her sexual affair, resulting pregnancy, and refusal to get married, she becomes less like the fashion plate and more like the New Woman.¹¹² The "New Woman" was a term taken from Sarah Grand's essay "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" in 1894, but the concept had already been a matter of public discussion for several years.¹¹³ Used to describe the intellectually independent woman who sought equal rights for women in both the public and private spheres, she was concerned with the double standards that existed for men and women in marriage, sexuality, education, and politics. Schreiner, of course, was representative of the movement, especially as her letters are rife with statements about her need for freedom. For example, she proclaimed, "I can't live on dependence. Ah, freedom, freedom,

¹¹² Interest in fashion and New Women were not mutually exclusive for many women activists at the time, but Schreiner portrays them as inherently contradictory. Schreiner was also surprised and appalled that some readers felt she was treating marriage lightly with Lyndall's rejection of it. But Schreiner actually believed, "It was because Lyndall, small child that she was, felt what a sacred and deathless thing true marriage should be that she refused to save her reputation by binding herself for ever to that man" (Letter to the Rev J.T. Lloyd, Undated fragment).

¹¹³ Schreiner was writing well before the New Woman, but most scholars agree she was a precursor or early example of the New Woman.

freedom, that is the first great want of humanity.”¹¹⁴ Opponents of the New Woman saw her as a threat to British life, and she represented the anxieties and fears of the time. The New Woman became associated with all that was socially unacceptable because of her failure to conform to domestic purity. She was labeled as over-sexed, over-educated, and mannish, while periodicals like *Punch* published caricatures of her smoking, riding a bicycle, and joining women’s clubs. In 1858, an article entitled “English Girls” in the *Saturday Review* reveals that ‘Plucky Girls’ (precursors to the New Woman) offended the English standard in their dealings with British colonized subjects. For instance, “Their adventures have taken place in India and they have failed to set the right example in their conduct towards the local people . . . they have also failed to understand their proper ‘duty’, once there, in representing English women” (qtd. in Fraser 132-133). The modern woman, whether she was “Plucky” or “New,” was a frightening idea because she threatened traditional power structures. But by turning her into a spectacle in periodicals she remained in the object position. Even some of the New Women participated in this visual construction.

According to SueAnn Schatz, many well-known figures of the New Woman movement were careful to encourage women to be “womanly,” because they knew that “to act or dress too radically would effectively alienate their potential middle-class audience” (88). But Schreiner obviously felt uncomfortable with supporting such gendered stereotypes and did not subscribe to this kind of new womanhood. Instead, she was infamous for her lack of fashion. Susan Horton explains, “Much to her friends’ chagrin, she wore virtually nothing but her ‘immortal green suit’ for ten years” (60).

¹¹⁴ Letter to Havelock Ellis, 29 March 1885

Schreiner obviously is aware of the different positions regarding fashion, and her insistence on wearing the green suit—no doubt against her friends' advice—perhaps served as an attempt to avoid the gaze. Lyndall, therefore, is a deliberate blend of the beautiful desirable object who bows to social expectations and the New Woman who resists those same restraints.

As we'll see in more detail when I discuss Schreiner's representations of Africans, despite the New Woman's modern feminist ideas, the movement is problematic for modern scholars because, as Sally Ledger points out, these writers were also inevitably entwined with empire, particularly the imperialist eugenics projects of the 1880s and 1890s. Sir Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, coined the term "eugenics" in 1883 and defined it as "the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally" (*Oxford*). The pseudo-science of eugenics provided justification for imperial dominance of the peoples of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and other colonies because they were viewed as lacking moral character, intellectual ability, and civilized instincts (*Oxford* 159). New Women saw racial minorities as a way to break out of the inferior position men put them into and realign the hierarchy where they were in the superior position to the inferior racial others. Meanwhile, New Women proponents argued that women's economic independence was socially necessary, while opponents argued that emancipated women were dangerous to the integrity of the English imperial race and the institution of the British empire (Jusova). This is again reminiscent of those plucky girls not setting a good example for the natives in India. New Women writers subtly showed contempt for the colonial master at the same time they reinforced certain British colonial

practices. Like many early feminists, these were middle-upper-class white women who were fighting for freedoms equal to men. However, even if they were not actively engaged in missionary or colonial practices, they often did not consider the different trials that women of color faced.

Initially, Schreiner seems to fit this label of imperial feminist assigned to her by scholars,¹¹⁵ because her proto-New Woman character, Lyndall, completely ignores the plight of the native Africans. As a child, when Lyndall turns her ice plant leaf into a diamond and dreams of gaining power equivalent to Napoleon Bonaparte, she is at the same time oblivious to native rock paintings nearby: “They sat under a shelving rock, on the surface of which were still visible some old Bushman-paintings, . . . the girls sat with their backs to the paintings” (10). The fact that Lyndall does not consider the paintings as worthy of notice, let alone as a physical representation of a native people who have been forced off the land because of colonial expansion, suggests that the New Woman is often blind to cultural oppression occurring outside her European perspective. Just as she does not see the ancient petroglyphs as a child, nor does she as an adult see native people except as representatives of gender inequality: “There at the foot of the ‘kopje’ goes a Kaffir . . . I suppose to kick his wife with his beautiful legs when he gets home. He has a right to; he bought her for two oxen” (194). From Lyndall’s perspective, she sees the black male objectifying the black woman by purchasing and beating her. But in analyzing the scene from a distance, Lyndall situates herself in the spectator position and objectifies

¹¹⁵ Ann McClintock argues, “white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting” (6). However, Liz Stanley believes, “Schreiner’s ideas about ‘race’ changed considerably from the 1870s to 1920, moving from liberal patronage to determined opposition to racism and segregation” (6).

the black male and his beautiful legs. Lyndall's experiences taught her that women are only property to be bought and sold and that in marriage a husband has all the power. Furthermore, when she watches a male and female ostrich, she observes what she does not see among human men and women, saying "I like these birds, they share each other's work, and are companions" (153). Despite, or because of, Lyndall's hyper-awareness of gender and the ways women are visually objectified, she is unable to see beyond the preconceived ideas that hang like a veil between her and the outer world. Lyndall's perceptions of what she observes are always filtered through her knowledge of the inequality of men and women, but not to inequalities in race. According to Simon Lewis, Lyndall is a typical colonial woman, who is subject to the patriarchy but still subjugates other races; she is "simultaneously at home and not at home in Africa" (Lewis 1). The objectification of the male gaze that women internalize acts as a veil separating herself—fragmenting her subjectivity. In addition, her awareness of gender inequalities proves a blind spot where other inequalities, such as race, occur.

The ability to see clearly and widely obviously is crucial to knowing and understanding the world. However, many people are unable to see through their prejudices, because they are blinded by conventional hierarchical binaries such as male/female, white/non-white, upper/lower class. But people like Schreiner and her characters often can get a glimpse through the veil even if they do not quite penetrate it. Yet, for Lyndall, this makes her unsatisfied with the world. In her anger about and impotence to change the position of women, Lyndall proposes that it might be better for her not to understand the difference between the gender roles, that she would be happier in ignorance, "To see the good and the beautiful and to have no strength to live it, is only

to be Moses on the mountain of Nebo, with the land at your feet and no power to enter. It would be better not to see it” (162). Nevertheless, later in the novel Lyndall explains that she never saw her baby before it died, admitting “They laid it close by me, but I never saw it” (246). Rather than being happy in her ignorance, she is drawn to sit by the child’s grave in the rain and mourn her lack of a visual memory. When Lyndall is dying, she also perceives her approaching death despite her earlier wish to the contrary. She faces it with a calm collectedness and reacquaints herself with her soul (through the mirror). Therefore, despite her previous belief, for Lyndall, and presumably Schreiner, it is better to see and know than not.

As mentioned previously, Lyndall’s construction of self is influenced by society’s imposition of the male gaze in addition to her (somewhat futile) resistance to that gaze. These contradictory aims coalesce in her vision of herself in the mirror, which she returns to again and again. She literally exemplifies Jacques Lacan’s mirror stage. Lacan describes the mirror stage as that moment in a child’s development where she recognizes herself in the mirror at the same time that she realizes she is not her mother. This initial fragmenting of the self occurs on several levels; she is separated from the mother, whom she had been apart of before, and from herself in seeing her reflection, which is not the real self. But the child is deluded into thinking it is whole and unified, though, as Lacan notes, she/he is forever fragmented. Similarly, as a woman, Lyndall reenacts this fragmentation throughout her life. Several times in the novel she looks at her reflection in the mirror and identifies with that reflection, again pointing to the idea that her identity is irrevocably wrapped up in her appearance; she states, “The large dark eyes from the glass looked back at her. She looked deep into them . . . ‘Dear eyes! We will never be quite

alone till they part us;—till then!’” (210). She fragments herself by describing her reflection almost as a separate entity and reinforces a solipsistic view of life. Despite her awareness of how society uses appearance and perception as a tool to keep women caged, she is not always conscious of the way it works on her own life and identity. For example, “She looks carefully at herself and the world about her, to see where her path must be made. There is no one to help her; she must help herself. She looks. These things she has—a sweet voice, rich in subtle intonations; a fair, very fair face” (183). Within this short excerpt, Lyndall moves from looking at herself and the world to how she appears to others, effectively turning herself into an object.

John Berger maintains that this is the way society has forced women to see themselves, arguing “A woman must continually watch herself” (46). A woman’s sense of self is divided, because she always has a sense of herself as a visual object. From childhood, she understands she is in a man’s world; and in that world, she internalizes the gaze. She constantly surveys herself in order to determine whether she is successful in her appearance. She does not look beyond herself but rather relies on others to define her identity. As Berger notes, “Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another” (46). Homi Bhabha argues for a similar construction of the self for racial minorities, where society takes the self, re-forms it, and then returns it changed. There is a power in looking, and by focusing on her appearance and giving the power to look to others (i.e. men), Lyndall unconsciously bows to the society against which she fights so hard. Moreover, along with the sense of self-reflection and visual connection with the self, mirrors are also linked with “female vanity” and “narcissism” (Lewis 45), further embedding Lyndall in traditional feminine norms.

However, when Lyndall is on her deathbed, the misty veils obscuring her vision are lifted and she is able to see clearly, even with the help of a mirror. Schreiner writes, “Through these months of anguish a mist had rested on [Lyndall’s] mind; it was rolled together now, and the old clear intellect awoke from its long torpor. It looked back into the past; it saw the present; there was no future now” (252). Lyndall’s reclamation of her soul and identity (by looking in the mirror) allows her to look back and see her position in the world. Presumably, she would now be able to engage in a reciprocal visual exchange with others (particularly Waldo) if she had the opportunity. But the heartbreakingly unfair reality of her death prevents this.

Unlike her character Lyndall, Olive Schreiner was prescient about the racial issues present in South Africa that eventually were sedimented into apartheid. She points out in an 1897 letter¹¹⁶ that South Africa is on a precipice and how they handle the native question will determine the future of their nation. I am not suggesting that Schreiner cannot be implicated in certain racist and imperialist ideas of the time; as a British South African, her very presence is tied to imperial efforts. And in that same letter she sets up a

¹¹⁶ Schreiner writes, “We fight Rhodes because he means so much of oppression, injustice, and moral degradation in South Africa;—but if he passed away tomorrow there still remains the terrible fact that something in our society has formed the matrix which has fed, nourished, and built up such a man! It is the far future of Africa during the next twenty-five or fifty years which depresses me. I believe we are standing on the top of a long downward slope. We shall reach the bottom at last, probably amid the [upheaval] of a war with our native races (then not the poor, savage but generous races whom we might have bound to ourselves by a little generosity and sympathy, but a fierce and half-educated, much brutalized race, who will have [come into] their own). I see always that day fifty or sixty years hence, and it is with reference to it that I judge of many things in the present. The men to come after us will reap the fruits of our ‘native policy’, as we today in a smaller fashion are reaping the fruits of the ‘Dutch Policy’ of sixty years ago. One touch of the consideration that the Dutch have wrung from us during the last fifteen years, yielded then from motives of humanity and with sympathy and respect, would have blended us into one people emotionally long ago.” Letter to J.X. Merriman, 3 April 1897

fairly condescending power structure between the white “them” and “their native races.” However, throughout her life she also indicated a strong consciousness of the fact that white Europeans were newcomers to Africa and that the native peoples had rights, too. For example, she resigned from the South African Women’s Enfranchisement League when black women were not included.¹¹⁷ As we saw from her biography, she, like her characters, resided in a hybrid position. Schreiner’s identification with both South Africa and England gave her a unique perspective in which she was both insider and outsider, both imbedded in the imperial project and aware of the degradation brought about by it.

Many scholars, such as McClintock, argue that this political consciousness only developed later in her life, because Schreiner cavalierly uses racist terms in *African Farm* and earlier works. Gerald Monsman argues that Schreiner reveals her divided loyalties in an unfinished novel she wrote about the diamond fields. He contends her description is “on the one hand, a colonial stereotyping that is reflected in and perpetuated by her paternalistic and condescending imagery; on the other, an awareness of the social inequities in this microcosm of frontier society” (8-9). Below is an excerpt from Schreiner’s description:

A very din of machinery and babel of tongues truly, for in the crowd are . . .

small, naked Mohurahs from the interior, grotesque, hideous with spindle legs and

¹¹⁷ “Starting in 1908 and 1909 with splits in some branches, the League [Cape Women’s Enfranchisement League] abandoned universal suffrage and adopted a franchise policy which excluded non-white women; and as a direct consequence Schreiner, a life-long supporter of universal suffrage, resigned from the League, insistently writing on one of its suffrage leaflets ‘ The women of the Cape Colony, all women of the Cape Colony’” (Stanley 37).

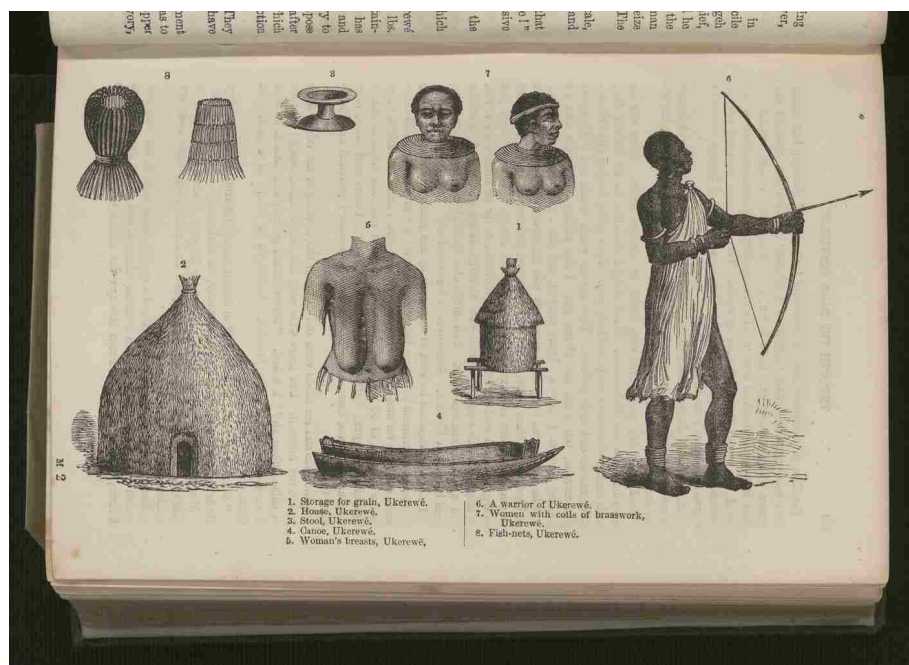
swollen stomachs and beast-like faces . . . The Zulu is here too, and the Kaffir: tall, finely developed creatures they are with magnificent muscles, and not wholly devoid of brains. They are clad in ragged European clothing for the most part; as are their wizened, cute, most ape-like little Hottentot cousins . . . and sneaking about here and there in the crowd is the little second-class Jewish diamond buyer, easily known by his nose and his shuffling gait. On the top and sides of the gravel heaps that tower like little hills about the mine, sit the sorters; generally white men, for the master does not like to see his nigger at the sorting table. He sits on a campstool or a turned-up bucket, and as he scrapes the gravel off the table with a piece of tin, watches eagerly for the sparkle of the coveted white stones; and yet keeps all the while half an eye on the black men who rock the sieve or break the blue clonts with thick heavy sticks” (qtd. in Monsman 8-9).

As Monsman suggests, Schreiner seemed to fall back on stereotypes of the bestial Africans, the sneaky Jew, and the greedy white man. However, her distinction between the different Africans suggests that because she lived in South Africa she already saw them as having more individuality than most white British women would. Likewise, her reference to the white “master” and his distrust of his non-white workers demonstrates her awareness of the way natural resources with huge economic potential can encourage such stratifications when one group is ostensibly in charge. European writers, including Schreiner and Joseph Conrad, were capable of enormous contradictions when writing about Africa, and language we term “racist” today can be found in even the most progressive writers of the time.

Schreiner does refer to various natives with pejorative terms such as “Kaffirs,” “Bushmen,” “Hottentots,” and “niggers.” Joseph Bristow, who edited the Oxford edition of the novel, agrees in an endnote that her use of such terms is “surprisingly insensitive” when contrasted with her public politics. In addition, Bart Moore-Gilbert points out that this diction was not even commonplace at the time. He uses Kipling and Rider Haggard, who were both pro-imperial writers, as comparisons to Schreiner because they rejected words such as “niggers.” So why would a sensitive writer like Schreiner use such terms? In an endnote to her book, Susan Horton refers to Noel Mostert, “who spent the first seventeen years of his life on the same dusty Karoo where Schreiner grew up.” He argues that most of the available terms have undesirable connotations, because rival tribes and colonial powers used different terms as pejorative labels (Horton 255). Therefore, Schreiner very well might not have realized how problematic her word choice really was. Of course, this also implicates her in imperial and colonial agendas because her unawareness suggests her blindness to other perspectives and how caught in the terminology white South Africans were.

For Schreiner’s European and British contemporaries, Africa was pictured in numerous imperialist illustrations. Leila Koivunen argues that the visual representations of Africa were based upon Western models. For example, she says that Europeans used portraiture to depict African chiefs, biological lists and diagrams to record plants and animals, and romantic landscape traditions to represent African geography (Koivunen 209). This idea appears in Henry Morton Stanley’s travel narrative *Through the Dark Continent* (1878), which includes several images from his journey through Africa. The ones including native Africans are mostly at a picturesque distance, with only headshots

presented in closer detail. Perhaps the African figure is less frightening or strange when at a distance or in fragmented parts. In the headshots or portraits, the figures are usually turned to the side (to display hair styles or dress), but there are several facing forward with direct eye contact. But those are the most exotic, showing bare breasted women with tassels and men with extreme hair spikes. The visual images of Africa and Africans were not just Westernized; they were also exoticized, indicating that not much had changed in the half century since Mary Prince wrote her narrative. The following illustration from Stanley's narrative shows the way African cultures and peoples were fragmented and presented in an anthropological format.¹¹⁸ With the emphasis on native women's breasts, however, the images clearly reflect the thin line between pseudo-science and pornography discussed in chapter two. These illustrations teach Stanley's readers what to expect visually from Africans at the same time Stanley situates them as inferior others.



¹¹⁸ The visual dissection of the women's sexual organs is a reminder from Chapter 2 of the ways Jordanova discusses "medical" exhibitions earlier in the century.

**Figure 4.2: Illustrations in Henry Morton Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent*
(1878)**

In addition to the native people's difference from the British is the unfamiliar landscape. Simon Lewis discusses the idea of prospect views and the impossibility of any kind of prospect on the vast flatness of the Karoo. The featurelessness of the landscape prevents people from being separate from it. But the absence of features and the presumptive erasure of native peoples from the landscape implicitly justifies the imperial occupation; similarly, the very implication that a landscape is featureless (which is impossible) suggests another way imperialism imposes a particular way of seeing and not seeing. This marginalization of the native people is a common criticism of *African Farm*. McClintock sees Schreiner's Africans as "fitful shadows" who only exist on the boundaries (268). But First and Scott claim that this marginalization was representative of colonialism, wherein European colonialists internalize the violence and oppression used against the native people. Bonaparte Blenkins and Tant Sannie's mistreatment of Waldo reflects the negative effects of colonialism, and "the children are both symbol and expression of that system and its consequences" (First and Scott 97). Moreover, according to Susan Horton, Ezekial Mphahlele asserts that Schreiner's representations of degraded Africans are sympathetic. He sees their distance and lack of voice as Schreiner's attempt to recognize their unacknowledged "suffering" and "agony" (Horton 144). It is true that native Africans exist on the margins of Schreiner's story, and Lyndall never really seems to see them or acknowledge their unique subjectivity. However, scholars often view Waldo as othered, much as the natives are, despite his whiteness. His

social and economic status situates him at the bottom, while his natural affinity to the land often creates a disconnection between him and the world of people. Thus, while obviously problematic, Waldo arguably can be representative of the inferior other who is semi-invisible to the dominant group.

In the chapter “Times and Seasons,” the narrator describes the progression of a person’s vision, presumably Waldo’s. It begins with infancy, “The year of infancy, where from the shadowy background of forgetfulness start out pictures of startling clearness, disconnected, but brightly coloured, and indelibly printed in the mind. Much that follows fades, but the colours of those baby-pictures are permanent” (101). Here is the idea that a child initially sees clearly and the remembrance of that vision remains with a person. As one continues through childhood, he starts to be influenced by both the material and abstract, such as faith and imagination. These ideas create a veil between the individual and the social world because they are so personal. The narrator explains, “And now between us and the dear old world of the senses the spirit-world begins to peep in, and wholly clouds it over . . . We look at the walls of the farm-house and the matter-of-fact sheep-kraals, with the merry sunshine playing over all; and do not see it” (104). Here, Waldo’s vision of the farm changes, and he is blinded by his imagination of God and the spiritual. He believes if he is to see God, he cannot be distracted by the world. But when the inevitable loss of faith comes, Waldo’s blindness frightens him because he does not see any proof of God either. The text continues, “We must have been awakened sooner or later. The imagination cannot always triumph over reality, the desire over truth” (113), and “We sit down with cold eyes and look at the world . . . ‘Yes, we see it now: there is

not God’” (114). When the veil lifts and he is confronted with previous delusions, Waldo takes on another abstract notion—nature.

The chapter suggests that in order to replace the God and faith that one lost, one turns to nature, “All these years we have lived beside her, and we have never seen her; now we open our eyes and look at her. The rocks have been to us a blur of brown; we bend over them, and the disorganized masses dissolve into a many-coloured, many-shaped, carefully-arranged form of existence . . . We have been so blinded by thinking and feeling that we have never seen the world” (116). The details of nature in this quotation seem to represent clarity of vision. When the social world does not intrude with prejudices, limitations, and distractions, a person can really “see” nature. Nature is much more complex and hybrid than one would imagine. Thus, observing nature is not enough; one has to see and know more, and we “will see something for ourselves” through dissections and experiments (117). Waldo begins to study math and natural science, learning to open his eyes and see the many details of nature for the first time. He also begins to understand that fragments add up to a whole. By seeing nature and the world, Waldo finds new meaning in life. According to Deborah Shapple, Waldo’s imagination and poetic sensibility allow him to see the fragments of the world and their potential for wholeness. Invoking Ralph Waldo Emerson, she associates Waldo with “property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet.” (Shapple 86). This understanding, one might even say belief, only increases Waldo’s wish to learn and see more. When Lyndall asks Waldo what he will do when he leaves the farm, he replies, “See—see everything,” implying not only the scope of his vision but possibly how everything works together (164).

Earlier, Schreiner's awareness of and debt to Emerson was mentioned in relation to a child's changing vision. Waldo's affinity to nature makes him similar to Emerson's man-child, who is able to maintain, or regain, some innocence leftover from childhood, suggesting Waldo keeps his eyes open like Dickens's Mark Tapley. He has a desire to see and know.¹¹⁹ Yet, implicit in the description of seeing nature are the gendered pronouns used to describe it. For example, "we open our eyes and look at *her*," and Waldo's openness to nature still categorizes him as a "*man-child*." Even though Waldo can clearly see nature, the gendered power hierarchy is still in place. Nature as female is still the object of the male gaze, implying the visual relationship to nature and the language used to describe it is always already imbedded in gender ideologies.

It is important that Lyndall and Em's earlier conversation displays their negation of native visual culture, because in contrast to the girls' lack of interest in the paintings, Waldo imagines the stones talking to him about when the Bushmen lived there and made the paintings: "To us they are only strange things, that make us laugh; but to him they were very beautiful . . . But we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on here, looking at everything like they look now" (16). Waldo then turns to Lyndall, "Has it never seemed so to you, Lyndall?" And she replies, "No, it never seems so to me" (16). Waldo instinctively turns to Lyndall because he knows she is more likely to understand, if not the idea then at least the attempt at an idea. But she does not understand. While Lyndall is caught up in contemplating her future appearance with her "diamond," Waldo's imagination allows him to contemplate/envision other times, other peoples, and

¹¹⁹ As I discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, the desire to know can be problematic, but the curiosity inherent in pursuing knowledge is crucial to eventually accepting others as equal subjects.

concepts of infinity and mortality. Moreover, he suggests the stones, which could also stand in for the land and the native people, have a look of their own and will continue to exist regardless of the colonizing forces. Waldo demonstrates his willingness to consider the native people's ability to look, which, as I have argued throughout the dissertation, stands in for their unique subjectivity. Waldo's description of the stones suggests that the native people and the land will outlast colonization and will retain their individual culture.

A distinct difference between how Lyndall sees and perceives the world in comparison to Waldo should be understood in terms of their individual preferences for reality and imagination. Lyndall prefers reality, while Waldo spends most of his time dreaming and imagining. Lyndall explains the difference between her and Waldo by saying, "If you have a few yards of earth to stand on, and a bit of blue over you, and something that you cannot see to dream about, you have all that you need, all that you know how to use. But I like to see real men" (164). The narrator implies early on that it is better to have an imagination than not: "It is a question whether it were not better to be the shabbiest of fools and know the way up the little stair of imagination to the land of dreams, than the wisest of men, who see nothing that the eyes do not show, and feel nothing that the hands do not touch" (43). Lyndall seems to suggest that in order to have the time and opportunity to dream and imagine, a person has to be free. Lyndall points out that Waldo has the freedom to travel alone or find work, whereas she would be shunned and denied help if she attempted to do so. Therefore, because Lyndall does not have the advantage of travel or daydreams, she proclaims, "It is enough for me if I find out what is beautiful and what is ugly, what is real and what is not" (163). Joseph Bristow

also explains that Lyndall distrusts dreams because of their ability to cover up the harsh realities of life; he argues, “Distrusting the enchantments of romance, Lyndall is the only one who understands how fiction can manipulate illusions to make the world seem a much more comfortable place” (Bristow x). Lyndall wants to remember the inequalities and oppression that she has observed, rather than soften their impact with imaginings. Yet, even Waldo experiences some form of social oppression because of his low socioeconomic position.

Waldo can be seen as a marginalized character because despite his European ancestry, he is a farm worker existing somewhere between the shadowy African workers and the white owners of the farm. His lack of formal education, social niceties, and money effectively locate him outside the dominant hegemony. In addition, his German ancestry situates him as other and inferior to the British. And Waldo’s vision of the paintings reveals his affinity for the people of the land. His ability, or at least desire, to see the artwork (unlike the girls) signals his wider, more accepting vision. He looks at the paintings and imagines the people and history that created them. He wants to understand them and the role they played in the history of the land he now occupies. The rock paintings stretch back 27,000 years and were still being produced into the nineteenth century (Ross). The high concentration of them in the area means that anyone paying attention would see them. The fact that Waldo is the sole interpreter of the paintings indicates his difference. But at the same time, Waldo does not actually interact with the Bushmen; instead, he gazes upon the paintings and imposes his imagination on them. And whether he means to or not, as Deborah Shapple says, he “works to efface the San’s lingering presence and to subject their histories to his own narratives” (88). Thus, Waldo

is caught inadvertently in the gap between his desire to look, accept, and understand, and his inherent imperial objectifying strategies.

Just as happens with Lyndall, as Waldo grows older, his perception of familiar objects changes because his identity changes: “Every now and then he glanced up at the old familiar objects: they had a new aspect that morning . . . He was leaving them all to the old life, and from his height he looked down on them pityingly” (190-191). Waldo’s sense of himself as starting out on a new life with vast opportunities awaiting him allows him to see the objects and people of the farm as stationary and inert in comparison to his adventurous self, which again perhaps inadvertently sets him up as the imperial male conqueror.

However, when Waldo does go out into the world to see more, as his position as a white male allows, circumstance and social forces again change his perceptions. He takes on an entry-level sales position in a shop, but he gets tricked into working for half wages and his horse dies because he is unfamiliar with the selfish, untrustworthy world. He ends up as a transport driver for wagons carrying supplies to the diamond mines. His employer takes advantage of him, and Waldo does more work than he should. As a result, his vision narrows due to hard labor; he tells Lyndall, “At first, when I walked along driving my wagons in the night, it was glorious; the stars had never looked so beautiful to me . . . But I soon changed, and saw nothing but the road, and my oxen” (223). Waldo’s socioeconomic status as the poor son of a (dead) German immigrant puts him at the bottom of the power hierarchy, which also situates him near the native people. In fact, many of his companions are native Africans. When Waldo reaches the point where he starts drinking just to get through the waking hours, he sees himself becoming “like an

animal,” or like a native (223). He was “only a body, not a soul” or brain (223). And he realizes how similar he now is to people he used to look down upon; he understands, “It is work, grinding, mechanical work, that they or their ancestors have done that has made them into beasts” (223). Waldo reaches rock bottom when he passes out drunk in the road and a black worker has to carry him out of harm’s way. At that moment, Waldo imagines the grinning man thinking, “You and I are comrades. I have lain in the road too. I know all about it” (224). Waldo now clearly sees the kind of lives that those with no power have, and he sympathizes with them. He stops drinking and eventually leaves the wagons to return to the city, where he stocks supplies for a store, the same job a “Kaffir” held at the first place he worked.

Waldo’s revelation of how easy it is to slip into lower, almost sub-human states connects him with native people, who were not allowed to work in any higher jobs. So ultimately, while Waldo as a white male may have more freedoms than Lyndall, he still is marginalized because of his lack of money and status. But as opposed to Lyndall, he would rather indulge his imagination and stay hopeful than give in to the disappointing reality of life, because he comes to realize that his imaginings are sometimes much better than the reality. He questions, “I used to see the waves stretching out as far as the eye could reach in the sunlight. My sea! Is the ideal always more beautiful than the real?” (226).¹²⁰ As Nancy Armstrong argues, nineteenth-century viewers were confronted with the difference between the original and the visual culture copy. The viewer who sees the copy then wants to see the reality of the original but is disappointed when the original does not live up to the copy (Armstrong 83). The gap between Waldo’s ideal image of the

¹²⁰ This disillusionment is reminiscent of Dickens and his character Martin when they encounter America.

sea and the reality is important for Schreiner's novel, because it mirrors the gaps in vision and understanding experienced not just by her characters but the outer world as well.

Waldo's semi-invisible status (and that of others like him) would prevent most of Schreiner's British audience from even being aware of them and their plight.

On returning to the farm, Waldo writes a long letter to Lyndall describing his disappointing experiences as a lower-class other. He tells her how his naive and idealistic perceptions of what the world has to offer were shattered, realizing, no doubt, that Lyndall would be sympathetic. He again turns to Lyndall knowing that she will, if not understand, at least accept his view of the world. When he finds out she has died, he is devastated because she was the one person he had a real connection to. He repeats to himself "You shall see her again" in order to cope with the grief (257). His only consolation and hope for the future is to "see" Lyndall again. Even when he is truly unhappy, he is optimistic about what he can do. The narrator points to the scope of a dreamer like Waldo, asking "Was it only John, think you, who saw the heavens open? The dreamers see it every day" (260). Waldo's imagination allows him to see the potential of the world and the unseen world. At the end, Waldo ceases to be "I" and immerses himself in his surroundings, seeing the fragments that make up the whole. It is at this point that he dies. Though lengthy, the description is important to review here:

The fellow looked, and at last stretched out one hand to a little ice-plant that grew on the sod-wall of the sty . . . One little leaf of the ice-plant stood upright, and the sun shone through it. He could see every little crystal cell like a drop of ice in the transparent green, and it thrilled him. There are only rare times when

a man's soul can see Nature. So long as any passion holds its revel there, the eyes are holden that they should not see her . . . Only then, when there comes a pause, a blank in your life, when the old idol is broken, when the old hope is dead, when the old desire is crushed, then the Divine compensation of Nature is made manifest. She shows herself to you [. . . but] desire, ambition, and the fierce agonizing flood of love for the living—they will spring again. Then Nature will draw down her veil: with all your longing you shall not be able to raise one corner; you cannot bring back those peaceful days. (267-8)

Waldo's death seems to represent the moment when vision is the clearest, which is after one realizes passions and prejudices have not only prevented clear vision of others (and nature) but also of the self. But even at this moment of death, Lyndall and Waldo's experiences are unique. In contrast to Lyndall's observation of the ice plant earlier in the novel when she sees a diamond, Waldo's ability to see the infinitesimal details of the ice plant is a result of his letting go of his human emotions. Whereas Lyndall's death is also about letting go, it is more about acknowledging herself as a person than negating the self as Waldo does.¹²¹

In his article, "Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*: Reconciling Feminism and Anti-Imperialism?" Bart Moore-Gilbert argues that Waldo can represent a form of subaltern resistance because his story "can in certain senses be seen as an allegory of the fate of some of the native peoples of South Africa" (94). If we accept Waldo as a representative of the colonial other, Waldo's inability to succeed in the world outside the

¹²¹ Perhaps Schreiner is suggesting that men should be less ego-oriented and women should be more.

farm and his premature death point to the negative results of imperialism and colonialism on the native Africans. In addition, the dystopian ending to the novel suggests that race and gender ideologies negatively affect a variety of people. Moore-Gilbert explains, “In the twinning of Waldo’s death with Lyndall’s, each equally pathetic, one might argue that—allegorically at least—Schreiner represents patriarchal imperialism as being as destructive of the autonomy of the native peoples as it is of the proto-feminism that Lyndall’s awakening embodies” (95). Throughout the novel, Waldo always is willing to learn and connect with others, perhaps because of his semi-invisible position. In contrast, Lyndall tries to resist connections by drawing a veil between her and the world, perhaps because of her hypervisible position. But at the moment of each of their deaths, they embrace their positions—Waldo losing himself in nature and Lyndall claiming herself in the mirror—allowing them to return to their childlike clarity of vision and making them equals. However, in Schreiner’s novel, despite what the reader may wish, they each die separately, each representing a fragment of a whole vision.

In the middle of the novel, Schreiner’s two protagonists are speaking about the position of women. Lyndall has just returned to the farm after several years absence, and she has new, strong opinions about the subordinate position of women. Waldo, who was once her close childhood companion, listens with interest but not much comprehension. Lyndall argues that society shapes women’s lives and “the world tells us what we are to be,” which she declares is pretty and useless (154). She bitterly questions why Waldo should have freedoms she is denied and eventually states, “We were equals once when we lay new-born babes on our nurse’s knees. We will be equals again when they tie up our jaws for the last sleep.” In return, Waldo is fascinated and “looked in wonder at the

little quivering face; it was a glimpse into a world of passion and feeling wholly new to him” (156). This small moment at the end of a lengthy lecture on women’s rights could easily be lost, but it represents everything I see Schreiner doing in regards to vision, gender, and empire. The entire conversation between Lyndall and Waldo is based upon the idea that they do not understand the other’s position. And Lyndall seems convinced that only at birth and death are people equal, suggesting the impossibility of equality in life, especially because of the cultural rules enforcing women’s subservience. Yet, at the same time, Waldo’s “wonder” and “glimpse” suggests a hope that one day people will understand others’ points of view.

I argue that for Schreiner, the ending does not represent a solipsistic defeat, but rather that Waldo’s and Lyndall’s potential is bound up in a feminist utopia where different genders and races are equal.¹²² She made her audience follow her characters’ suffering and troubles to their inevitable end, but along the way the text teaches the audience to see (or at least to attempt to see) in a new egalitarian way. Schreiner wanted her readers to feel the same urge to achieve a clearer, more hybrid and inclusive vision, despite the challenges. Lyndall points out that Waldo is more interested in his dreams and imaginings than the reality in front of him: “And as for you, from of old you can see nothing that is not separated from you by a few millions of miles, and strewed over with mystery. If women were the inhabitants of Jupiter, of whom you had happened to hear something, you would pore over us and our condition night and day; but because we are before your eyes you never look at us” (153-154). Lyndall is stuck in the reality that she bitterly resists, so she cannot see Waldo’s point of view. And because he cannot

¹²² Schreiner’s *Woman and Labour* expands on this idea of a world that transcends gender.

understand the position of women, Waldo is unable to see Lyndall's point of view. But this disconnection is not permanent; Waldo does want to understand Lyndall and if they had lived maybe he would have. Schreiner's novel suggests that people are capable of learning to see more clearly and reach a more intimate understanding of others.

Schreiner seems to have believed that humans are capable of better things, including equality for men and women. In her later work, she went so far as to imply that the best possible world is one in which gender is transcended and art/literature will help one get there. Margaret Stetz says that in Schreiner's utopian story, "The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed," Schreiner suggests the best artist or poet is a "fantastic, androgynous being in whom feminine and masculine features are inextricably blended and to whom no social categories of any sort apply" (Stetz 96). For Schreiner, Waldo and Lyndall seem to represent this potentiality for a better future, because each sees partially but together they represent the whole and a potential for a hybrid vision. These two people come as close as a man and woman can to understanding one another, perhaps because Waldo does not quite fit into the traditional patriarchy due to his affinity to the other and his lower class status. Their willingness to accept the other's views is also important, for while they do not see eye to eye they can understand the other's desire to see and know more. This willing reciprocity (if not quite understanding) is a hopeful sign for eventually moving beyond not just gender but also race and class.

Of all the authors I have examined in this project, Schreiner was the most idealistic in imagining what humans *could* be. But her fictional representation demonstrates how far from this ideal the world she lived in actually was. During the time she was writing *African Farm*, England was closer to gender and racial equality than it

ever had been, but there were still huge barriers to overcome. In fact, women did not gain the right to vote for several more decades, and racial apartheid in South Africa is a recent memory in today's world. While Schreiner could not know that it would be another century before her beloved Africa reached a point of (relative) equality,¹²³ she was prescient of the impossibility of reciprocity while cultural prejudices veiled a clear vision of the world.

Despite Schreiner's sometimes bleak portrayal of the world and gender roles, her novel ultimately leaves the reader with a sense that oneness is possible, even if the future remains unknown: "And so, it comes to pass in time, that the earth ceases for us to be a weltering chaos. We walk in the great hall of life, looking up and round reverentially. Nothing is despicable—all is meaning-full; nothing is small—all is part of a whole, whose beginning and end we know not" (118). And in her writing and publishing of the novel she provided a critical lens through which some may see the need to pave the way for change.

Thus, while *The Story of an African Farm's* proto-feminist Lyndall still represents European colonizers who struggle to see beyond the veil of their preconceived ideas to the native peoples and the land, I argue that Schreiner does this deliberately to demonstrate the blind spots in a New Woman's vision. She anticipates third-wave feminism by realizing that feminists cannot create a more equal world until they acknowledge the existence of other inequalities. Likewise, while Waldo is closer to the colonial other than most white European men, he is still blind to some of his own prejudices. I concur with Simon Lewis, who in his recent book identifies Schreiner as a

¹²³ Even that is arguable

“future-oriented idealist.” Her dreams of a better world (a better South Africa) hinge on the idea that people (not just feminists) should be open to expanding their own limited vision and embrace others (2). As the novel’s epigraph by Alexis de Tocqueville suggests, *African Farm* is not just about Lyndall and the New Woman but about South Africa and *all* of its people. In her statement entitled “Closer Union” from 1909, she declares, “It is out of this great heterogeneous mass of humans that the South African nation of the future will be built” (Schreiner 43).

AFTERWORD

In the past several decades, visual culture has become an increasingly accepted and complex area of study. And the nineteenth century is often cited as the turning point in modern visual culture, because of the advent of photography and the extreme popularity of visual mediums for entertainment (panoramas, exhibitions, illustrations, etc). Now, with the Internet and digital archives readily available, scholars, such as myself, can examine the ways in which literature affected or was affected by visual culture. This is relevant to our contemporary world, because with the Internet consuming more and more of our lives, scholars are also constantly examining the effects of the overwhelming amount of visual information that we receive on a daily basis; we are all subject to the numerous and repeated ideologies imbedded in visual culture. I found that many nineteenth-century authors were struggling with the same issues we are today, including how cultural prejudices as reflected in visual culture influence the ways different genders, classes, races, and nationalities interacted. Despite certain contradictions and the inevitable influence of the dominant culture, I argue that the texts I have chosen suggest moments of more critical, and egalitarian, forms of looking—similar to what we attempt to teach our students in the contemporary college classroom.

The texts I include in this dissertation represent a range of positions, from Dickens's unconscious challenge of the class hierarchy to Mary Prince's overt call to abolish slavery. Each text, however, implies that maintaining a safe, objectifying distance is the way to keep up the traditional power structures, while face-to-face exchanges are where inequalities are challenged. The way twenty-first century social media allows us to have virtual relationships at a safe distance is a frightening replication of the nineteenth-

century constructions of power and distance. However, video chat technology might mitigate the distance factor because people could still engage in a form of face-to-face interaction, although mediated by the computer screen. But, as I argue in the introduction, actually traveling and experiencing new cultural settings is important to truly understand the other; if one's only experience of the other is through technology, he or she will not have enough understanding to achieve a full reciprocity.

In this dissertation, I examined the ways in which Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*, *The History of Mary Prince*, Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* include moments where a visual exchange between disparate people is possible, even if only momentarily. I argue that in order for this visual exchange to be possible, each participant needs to acknowledge the other's unique subjectivity. The problem, of course, is that such reciprocity is very difficult to achieve and sustain when cultural prejudices often emphasize difference and inequality. However, the texts I have analyzed all suggest, through these moments of reciprocal exchange, that there is hope for a more egalitarian community. A reciprocal visual exchange does not mean that all gender and racial inequalities are solved, rather that the participants are aware of them and acknowledge that the other should be considered a human subject with the ability to act in the world. The complex issues surrounding England's imperial mission as well as the resistance to change and changing power structures (whether in terms of gender, class, or race) make these visual exchanges difficult even in fiction. Yet, these authors seem to be alerting their British audience that the audience's own blindness to inequalities is hindering their development as both moral people and a larger successful community.

I have by no means exhausted the topic, and an examination of visualities in fiction can be used with other texts in different (post)colonial contexts, such as Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1867). I envision adding a chapter entitled, "Exhibitions and Multiple Visions in *The Moonstone*," which considers the ways in which the imperial male, as represented by Franklin Blake, is threatened by the visual power of traditionally inferior others. Blake's possession of the Indian diamond, which has clear connections to the Koh-I-Noor and the Great Exhibition, draws looks from women and colonial others that disrupt his inherent sense of self and place in the world.

I will conclude with some speculation on several tensions present in this project that deserve further attention. First, throughout the dissertation, I argue that examples of visual exchange represent brief utopian moments, which suggest a subliminal hope for productive and progressive change. Yet, I also argue that these moments become more difficult as the century progresses. The latter certainly seems as if it would challenge the former position. However, as Fredric Jameson states in *Archaeologies of the Future*, utopian ideas "always lie in the dialectic of Identity and Difference" (xii). The utopian impulse that reveals itself in the reciprocal visual exchanges I identify in texts throughout the century is a way for the authors and their readers (consciously or unconsciously) to engage with identity and difference. For example, each exchange is between disparate peoples, whether through gender, nationality, race, or class. To participate in a visual exchange, each person has to examine his or her own identity in relation to the other, who may initially seem radically different. As I mentioned earlier, with England expanding its imperial control to more and more territories throughout the long nineteenth century, the British were faced with a crisis of national and personal identity. In order to justify

imperialism, the British had to see themselves as superior to those people and places they were conquering; but how did they deal with the ethical problems inherent in many of the exploitative practices? I posit that authors revealed these contradictory impulses in their works, and the visual exchange is one place where this tension is revealed.

Secondly, I focus primarily on the historical and social context of the texts I analyze, but another possibility for future work might be whether the changing medical/scientific understanding of vision influenced the way vision and the gaze showed up in nineteenth-century texts. A natural extension of that examination, the narrative techniques and language that writers used to describe vision and visualities, is another area to explore. In particular, I am interested in learning whether visual language changed or expanded specifically in the long nineteenth-century.

The many potential avenues of study related to this project that beg for future analysis suggests, to me, that in visual culture and vision, we have found an important contact zone in which to investigate how cultural prejudices are repeated and resisted in literature.

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