

EMPIRE, INDUSTRY AND FEMININITY: FEMALE SEXUALITY IN THE VICTORIAN NOVELS *NORTH AND SOUTH* BY ELIZABETH GASKELL, AND *SHE* BY H. RIDER HAGGARD

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ABSTRACT

In the Victorian era, men and women were thought to inhabit ‘separate spheres’. Scholars have argued that the rigidity of these spheres and the promised conclusion of a normative, heterosexual marriage prompted Victorian writers to experiment with the boundaries of sexuality within their novels. This paper focuses on how and why the ideology of nineteenth-century female sexuality functions in two prominent Victorian novels: H. Rider Haggard’s *She* and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South*. Haggard’s antagonist, Ayesha, and Gaskell’s protagonist, Margaret, both use their femininity to traverse the Victorian binaries of the private (domestic) and the public (work) ‘separate spheres’. This paper explores female sexuality in relation to two other social structures that dominated nineteenth-century British society: industry and empire. Firstly, I examine the extent to which these female characters blur the lines of the private and public spheres. Secondly, I analyse the relationships that Ayesha and Margaret share with their male counterparts. Ultimately, it is the Victorian obsession with maintaining order that prescribes certain sexualities as useful and tameable (such as Margaret’s), while in turn castigating sexualities that do not preserve this prescription as damaging and untameable (such as Ayesha’s). I situate the Victorian maintenance of such rigid ideals in queer, post-colonial, and socio-economic discourses, providing deep background and literary pretext to contemporary conversations about gender and sexuality norms.

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century saw ‘sex...[emerge]...as a problem requiring vigilant social control’ (Dever, 2005: 159). As a result, the Victorian era helped establish modern categories of sex, sexuality, and gender (Furieux, 2011: 769). As a ‘socially authoritative [discourse]’ (Dever, 2005: 160), literature became a tool that enforced this control and categorisation of sex, where sexuality became ‘not simply condemned or tolerated, but inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all’ (Foucault, 1978: 24). This paper considers how female sexuality is categorised, controlled and ‘tamed’ in two Victorian novels: *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell and *She* by H. Rider Haggard. My examination of these novels specifically considers how Gaskell and Haggard attempt to control and ‘tame’¹ the sexuality of their female protagonists into normative Victorian gender roles. In analysing how female sexuality existed as a function of broader social orders in the Victorian era that saw the conception of modern gender norms, we can better understand how ‘systems of utility’ similarly serve to shape gender and sexual categorisations in the present day.

North and South (1855) and *She* (1887) engage with two of the Victorian era’s defining social structures: industry and empire. Gaskell and Haggard’s constructions of - and attempts to tame - female sexuality are executed, respectively, in conjunction

with these social structures. *North and South* has ‘received much critical attention for its concern with the relations of labour and capital’ (Matus, 2007: 35), by following Margaret Hale’s move from the quaint southern village of Helstone to the industrial northern town of Milton, where she meets the mill owner John Thornton, who is in the midst of a dispute with his employees over low pay and bad working conditions. The novel is an analysis of nineteenth-century industrial relations, as well as a commentary on the utility of ‘women’s role in a society transitioning into a fully-fledged industrial economy’ (Dzelzainis, 2015: 114). Meanwhile, H. Rider Haggard’s ‘avowedly popular and sensational’ (Reid, 2015: 363) *She* recounts the colonial adventures of Horace Holly and his nephew Leo as they travel to eastern Africa and come across a mysterious tribe called the Amahagger, controlled by the ruthless female dictator Ayesha. Gender categories depict differing representations of empire, where Holly embodies ‘the male force of decent imperialism’ while Ayesha’s femininity breeds an ‘empire of sterile, unproductive narcissism’ (David, 2002: 96).

This analysis begins by introducing the ‘separate spheres’, an ideology that defined gender categorisation in the Victorian era. I ask to what extent, and why, the female protagonists in *North and South* and *She* conform to these ‘separate spheres’. I then explore the relationships that the novels’ female protagonists share with their male protagonist counterparts. The analyses of

¹ I use the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the verb ‘tame’: ‘to become tame; to grow gentle...or submissive,’ ‘to reduce the intensity

of; to tone down; to temper, soften, mellow.’ Throughout, this paper, I use the words ‘tameability’ and ‘tameness’ to the same effect.

female sexuality in regard to the 'separate spheres' and male protagonists are considered through the lenses of empire and industry, in order to deconstruct how broader social structures are instrumental in our novelists' attempts to categorise, control and 'tame' sexuality.

LEAVING THE 'DOMESTIC SPHERE'

The Victorian debate around gender led to 'the tremendous effort to understand women, to manage them, to find out what they want' and to comprehend 'their nature, their functions, their aptitudes, their desires' and 'above all, their difference from men' (Crosby, 2012: 2-3). One response to this so-called 'woman question' was the notion of 'separate spheres'. The ideology of the 'separate spheres' hinges on the idea that men and women belong to two distinct social worlds. According to this categorisation, men are more naturally suited to the 'public sphere' of politics, professionalism and wage labour, whereas women belong to the 'private' or 'domestic sphere' as they are deemed more appropriately equipped to solve household issues and carry out emotional labour. The establishment of these strict, oppositional binaries – man/woman, public/private, industrial/domestic – embody the Victorian attempt to shape and control gender norms, and to classify gender and sexuality by fashioning a 'cultural myth' that defines what it means to be the 'Victorian domestic ideal of white, middle-class femininity' (Dever, 2005: 162). Victorian novelists, including the authors of *She* and *North and South*, experiment with these strict categorisations of gender. The female protagonists of these novels, Ayesha and Margaret, both traverse the ideology of Victorian feminine sexuality in their attempts to leave the private, feminine sphere and trial their place in the public, masculine sphere.

The female antagonist in *She*, Ayesha – who is known to her followers as 'She-who-must-be-obeyed' (Haggard, 2008: 82) – firmly dominates the public sphere as the undisputed leader of the eastern African tribe, the Amahagger. Ayesha's position as ruler of the Amahagger people undermines Victorian Britain's notion of the separate spheres and flouts the binary of gendered separation. The Amahagger endorse the hierarchy of female supremacy and male subservience as sacrosanct. A male Amahagger follower confirms this subversion of normative Victorian gender categorisation by asserting that the Amahagger see female vitality and the public sphere as complementary: 'In this country the women do as they please. We worship them, and give them their way, because without them the world could not go on; they are the source of life' (Haggard, 2008: 107).

Such departures from normative Victorian gender categorisations are frequently met with the polarised partition of womanhood and female sexuality; if a woman does not subscribe to the feminine domestic ideal, she is condemned to moral destitution. Femininity becomes divisible 'into two neat categories – virgin and whore, angel and demon, victim and queen' (Dever, 2005: 164). The novel's first-person narrator, Ludwig Horace Holly, endorses this polarity, 'where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters' (Gilbert and Gubar, 2010: 1932). We see this when Holly judges the Amahagger – a society where 'the weaker sex has established its rights' (Haggard, 2008: 86) – as being a 'demonic cannibalistic matriarchy' (Haggard, 2008: xv).

However, Ayesha is demonised as Holly's 'European...sexual nightmare' (Haggard, 2008: xv) for reasons other than her defiance of Victorian gender categorisation; she also disturbs established Victorian discourses *vis-à-vis* Empire and imperialism by attempting to apply Amahagger norms (notably her own supremacy) to the British Isles. In her belief that she has found her resurrected long-lost love in Holly's nephew, Leo, Ayesha plans to leave Africa for Britain in order to govern British society under her own rule, 'overthrow[ing] the British

monarchy and claiming for herself a hierarchical position 'above the law'. Further to this, Ayesha is confident that she 'can at any rate destroy' the current 'tyrants' that govern Britain, and thus make way for herself and Leo to 'rule the land' (Haggard, 2008: 225). Ayesha's language mirrors 'the vocabulary of nineteenth-century culture' which is 'plentiful' with colonialist phrases such as 'inferior' or 'subject races,' 'subordinate peoples,' 'dependency,' 'expansion' and 'authority' (Said, 1994: 9). Haggard's use of this archetypically colonialist language to describe Ayesha's planned invasion of Britain taps into the Victorian anxiety of 'reverse colonisation', that the 'civilised' world is on the point of being colonized by 'primitive' forces' (Arata, 1990: 623). Horace Holly's concerns about Ayesha's revolutionary desires echo the fear that Victorian British society will be afflicted by 'some savage woman' (Haggard, 2008: 130), and her plans of implementing 'reverse colonisation':

The terrible *She* had evidently made up her mind to go to England, and it made me absolutely shudder to think what would be the result of the arrival there...In the end she would, I had little doubt, assume absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth, and, though I was sure that she would speedily make ours the most glorious and prosperous empire that the world has ever seen, it would be at the cost of a terrible sacrifice of life.

(Haggard, 2008: 226)

Ayesha's breakdown of the gendered separate spheres, and her desire to initiate Britain's imperial downfall makes her the ultimate threat to British society, due to her inability to be tamed into the normative Victorian gender categories of the separate spheres.

Ultimately, it is only through Ayesha's eventual death that the order of British society can be maintained. As Ayesha, Holly and Leo make their way to England, they arrive at a volcano that 'towered above [them] for fifteen hundred or two thousand feet' (Haggard, 2008: 236). Ayesha takes the lead in walking over the volcano's bridge, and past 'the flame of Life' (Haggard, 2008: 255) which eventually engulfs her, strips her of her immortality, and kills her. Before she dies, the 'mysterious fire' (Haggard, 2008: 256) leaves her 'no larger than a big monkey, and...too hideous for words' (Haggard, 2008: 257), resembling a 'post-Darwinian figure of atavistic reversion' (Reid, 2015: 372). Ayesha's death by 'pillar of fire' (Haggard, 2008: 260) has been read as symbolic of phallic punishment. This punishment realises 'the inexorability of the patriarchal law [that Ayesha] has violated in Her Satanically overreaching ambition' (Gilbert and Gubar 1989: 20) to rule over Britain. This, and her attempted subversion of the separate spheres, all lead to her to eventual death, and cause her to be destroyed and 'conquered by linear time', 'men' and 'history' (Murphy, 1999: 768).

North and South's protagonist, Margaret Hale, also flouts Victorian gender categorisation. Gaskell's novel follows the structure of a 'marriage plot', the nineteenth century's 'dominant form of literary fiction' (Dever, 2005: 157), where the trajectory of the novel ends with the 'successful union' of marriage but 'begins with difference – dissimilitude in similitude' (Gray, 2014: 269). The conclusion of a marriage plot sees 'heterosexual marriage as the only logical outcome, as inevitable, [and] as climactic' (Dever, 2005: 158). As a result the marriage plot becomes a 'formal device that frames a still wider array of sexual possibilities' (Dever, 2005: 158), where sexuality and gender norms can be defied throughout the novels' duration due to the inevitability of a safe return to marriage and the restoration of normative gender roles.

In *North and South*, Margaret Hale's attempts to leave the domestic sphere correlate with the antagonisms that defined

nineteenth-century Victorian British society. Margaret's move from the southern village of Helstone to the northern city of Milton epitomises these antagonisms. 'Migrating from country to city meant learning how to subsist in a wholly new environment' and illustrates the difference between the south's 'agricultural economy and cottage industry' and the north's 'dangerous working conditions, primitive and filthy living arrangements, polluted water and air, and rapidly spreading epidemic diseases' (Nord, 2012: 510).

The differences between England's north and south underpin Margaret's difficulties in adjusting to the economic and social changes incited by the Industrial Revolution of the Victorian era, while also introducing the social and economic dissimilitude that initially exists between Margaret and her love interest, Mr Thornton. Margaret and Helstone embody Britain's aristocratic, rural society: 'a hierarchy based on property and patronage' (Brown, 2004: 70). In Helstone, 'people took their places in a pyramidlike structure' (Brown, 2004: 70); the working, middle and upper classes shared a mutual reliance, and the 'high- and low-born were bound together by a system of agrarian economic dependency' (Brown, 2004: 70). Margaret idealises the harmoniousness of this 'vertical' (Brown, 2004: 71) class structure and asserts that 'Helstone is about as perfect a place as any in the world' (Gaskell, 1987: 28), the epitome of a 'stable agricultural world [in] southern England' (Levine, 2012: 97). On the other hand, Margaret's love-interest, Mr. John Thornton, and the northern town of Milton represent a new 'horizontal' (Brown, 2004: 71) class society, 'where factory smoke darkens the sky, and fortunes are quickly made and lost' (Levine, 2012: 97) – an England where 'for the first time, different economic groups or classes began to oppose each other's economic interests' (Brown, 2004: 71).

At the opening of the novel, Gaskell makes the differences between Margaret's 'aristocratic-landed interests' (Brown, 2004: 71) and Mr. Thornton's 'middle-class-industrial interests' (Brown, 2004: 71) strikingly clear. In their first meeting, Margaret learns of Mr. Thornton's feud with his striking employees; to Margaret this dispute shows 'two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own' (Gaskell, 1987: 118). Further, Margaret emphasises: 'I never lived in a place before where there were two sets of people always running each other down' (Gaskell, 1987: 118), a concept at odds with the innocent 'bright serene contemplation of the hopeful future' (Eliot, 1994: 25) that she had whilst in Helstone. Mr. Thornton affirms that this is a 'battle between the two classes' (Gaskell, 1987: 84), but vows to continue to make 'laws and decisions which work for my own good in the first instance – for [his employees] in the second' (Gaskell, 1987: 118); if 'the fools' plan to strike, he says, 'let them' (Gaskell, 1987: 117). The serenity of the south is compromised by the Hale family's move to the north, which was largely incited by economic hardship, demonstrating the precariousness of their tentatively middle-class status. Gaskell sees that in Milton the Hale family have only two servants, a small house and a low income of 'thirty pounds a year', while 'in Hampshire they could have met with a roomy house and pleasant garden for the money' (Gaskell, 1987: 60).

'Disturbed by [the] hostile relations between social classes' (Nord, 2012: 511) and the instability of her own social standing, Margaret relates the 'painful alienation and disorientation' (Nord, 2012: 512) that she has, not only in terms of class confusion, but also regarding gender categorisation. In chapter VIII, Margaret delves into the public sphere, and comes across a number of working-class 'factory people' (Gaskell, 1987: 73). Gaskell conveys Margaret's discomfort at the 'very outspokenness' of these 'workmen', who come 'rushing along, with bold, fearless faces, and loud laughs and jests' (Gaskell, 1987: 73). Margaret's discomfort in the public sphere is evident, as she observes their 'unrestrained voices, and their

carelessness of all common rules of street politeness' (Gaskell, 1987: 73), a description that nods to Margaret's ignorance of class-relations in a horizontal class system, and her inexperience with the working class people who live on that 'side of town' (Gaskell, 1987: 73). Margaret's discomfort also manifests in terms of her femininity; she dislikes receiving compliments regarding her 'personal appearance' (Gaskell, 1987: 71) and struggles to categorise such advances. Instances such as these strengthen the correlation between Margaret's category displacement of both class and gender, and also foretell Margaret's eventual conformity to the status and space deemed acceptable for a middle-class bourgeois woman: marriage and the private domestic sphere.

The novel recapitulates this correlation during its climax, through which 'the political conflict between masters and men is most fully and powerfully integrated with the love story' (Clausson, 2007: 21). In Chapter XXII 'A Blow and its Consequences', the fraught relationship between Mr. Thornton and his employees incites a riot outside of his family home, resulting in the 'unemployed union men...hurl[ing] rocks at the home of their boss' (Nord, 2012: 517). When Thornton exits his house to address the rioters, Margaret follows him, leaving the safety of the Thornton family indoor drawing room to step outside into their 'front garret' (Gaskell, 1987: 183). Margaret's movement out of this domestic space and into the public sphere results in physical castigation for leaving the private sphere: a 'sharp pebble flew by her' (Gaskell, 1987: 179) causing her a 'terrible blow' (Gaskell, 1987: 181). Margaret explains that she held the naïve belief that her femininity would be 'protection' enough against the rioters, when instead she should have stayed 'out of harm's way' in the refuge of the domestic sphere of the Thornton family home. As Margaret 'lay like one dead on Mr. Thornton's shoulder' (Gaskell, 1987: 179), this scene implies that there is a 'transgressive nature' to 'women's intervention in workplace affairs' (Dzelzainis, 2015: 115), and sees Margaret slowly realise her role as belonging exclusively to the feminine, private sphere.

Margaret's experimental entrance into the public sphere results in emotional and physical punishment. For this reason, the novel concludes with the eventual marriage of Margaret and Mr. Thornton, once Margaret's sexuality is disciplined into the 'domestic' sphere; Margaret's sexuality acts as a catalyst for the 'reconciliation' of this social class conflict 'through the mechanism of cross-class marriage' (Nord, 2012: 519), where it is only through the '[subordination] of all social differences to those based on gender that [domestic] novels bring order to relationships' (Dever, 2005: 13). Margaret is tamed into the role of 'Angel of the House', the epitome of Victorian 'middle-class, wifely, maternal, domestic femininity' (Dever, 2005: 163). In her marriage to Mr. Thornton a 'hard-charging capitalistic male', the two together simultaneously fulfil the 'dominant sexual ideals of femininity and masculinity in Victorian Britain' (Dever, 2005: 163) while knitting their 'vertical' and 'horizontal' class differences in a symbolic smoothing of nineteenth-century class antagonisms.

FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY

'Masculinity is self-evidently central to our understanding' of Britain as 'an industrializing society', 'an imperialist country' and the 'increasingly sharp category distinctions of gender and sexuality' in the nineteenth century (Tosh, 2005: 330). It is for this reason, that the relationships Ayesha and Margaret share with their male counterparts are crucial to revealing how female sexuality is categorised as a function of Victorian constructions of masculinity. Holly determines Ayesha to be unstable, as she personifies the effeminacy that he is attempting to evade, and transgresses the boundaries of sexuality, gender, race and imperialism that do not allow the male protagonist to ameliorate his effeminacy. Meanwhile, Margaret's relationship with Mr.

Thornton is deemed as tameable because she motivates his role as a 'Captain of Industry', leading to the restoration of social disparities and class antagonism through the sensible language of domestic fiction.

Alongside the crisis of the 'woman question', many Victorians believed Britain to also be in the midst of a masculinity crisis. In his essay entitled 'About Fiction' (Olmsted, 1979), Haggard fears that the rise in domestic fiction would feminise and weaken British men (Armstrong, 2008: 472) and result in the overall 'failure of middle-class masculinity' (Armstrong, 2000: 101). The 'lost-world' genre, of which Haggard's *She* is an example, provides authors with the opportunity to manufacture 'a powerful reconceptualization of masculinity' (Deane, 2008: 206). In these 'lost-world' narratives, the British constructions of the colonies as hyper-masculine spaces serve as an antidote to British effeminacy and serve to restore gender categorisation into the separate spheres. Literary constructions of 'lost worlds' such as the eastern African Amahagger become 'timeless strongholds of primal masculinity' (Deane, 2008: 206). At the novel's opening, and before his departure for Africa, the male protagonist in *She*, Horace Holly, acknowledges his inability to attain heterosexual masculinity after overhearing a woman 'call [him] a monster' and concludes that 'women hated [him]' (Haggard, 2008: 17). Holly's gynophobia manifests further in the homoerotic pederasty that he has with his nephew Leo. This pederasty, a modernised, Victorian version of the ancient Greek ideal *paidierastia*, the eroticised mentorship and love of an older man for a younger man (Roberts, 2007), is the result of a lack of female influence and sexuality, an ailment that results in their mutual effeminacy (Cohen, 1987: 802). With this, Holly's voyage to Africa and his pursuit of a 'lost world', becomes an attempt to refute this effeminacy, to reclaim his masculinity and to restore order through conformity to the gender categorisations of the separate spheres.

However, Ayesha's destructive femininity and its refusal to conform to the Victorian middle-class bourgeois ideal does not allow for Holly's hopes of hyper-masculinity to be realised, nor does it allow for Holly to resolve his gynophobia. Haggard's eroticisation of Ayesha fails to masculinise Holly, and instead has a 'castrating impact' (Scholz and Dropmann, 2011: 183); Holly's attraction to Ayesha's 'perfect imperial shape' and 'serpent-like grace' (Haggard 143) leads instead to the eventual subversion of Victorian gender roles, and sees Holly submit himself as subordinate to Ayesha's rule over the public sphere. Ultimately, Holly 'falls prey to his own desires' (Scholz and Dropmann, 2011: 183):

I could bear it no longer. I am but a man, and she was more than a woman. Heaven knows what she was – I do not! But then and there I fell upon my knees before her, and told her in a sad mixture of languages – for such movements confuse the thoughts – that I worshipped her as never woman was worshipped and that I would give my immortal soul to marry her.

(Haggard, 2008: 172)

Ayesha's sexuality here further upsets the separate spheres and fails to subscribe to the ideal of the domestic 'Angel of the House'; rather, Holly condones Ayesha's beauty, hyper-sexualised femininity and her 'awful loveliness and purity' as 'evil' (Haggard 143). This characterisation of Ayesha as 'snake-like' and 'evil' establish her role as a *Femme Fatale*, the literary stock character that caricatures 'the seductive, threatening, sexually assertive woman' (Stott, 1989: 5).

On the other hand, in *North and South*, Gaskell ensures Margaret's conformity to the separate spheres by using her relationship with men – specifically, her relationship with Mr. Thornton – to bring together the vertical and horizontal antagonisms of Britain's Victorian class system. Margaret's femininity is useful in enabling Mr. Thornton to become a

'Captain of Industry', and hence smoothing the cooperation between the striking working classes and the middle-class industrialists.

Margaret's relationship to the Higgins family is crucial to this reconciliation; she befriends a striking miner and employee of Mr. Thornton, Mr Higgins and his daughter, Bessy. As a 'southerner in the north' (Dredge, 2005: 91), Margaret visits the Higgins family home, an act that she intends to be seen as patronage towards the family, and one which reflects her 'vertical' understanding of social class, where the higher classes assume a level of responsibility for the lower classes. Higgins, unfamiliar with such paternalistic practices and being 'none so fond of having strange folk' in his home (Gaskell, 1987: 74), throws caution to the wind and accepts Margaret's entry into his home: 'Yo're a foreigner, as one may say, and maybe don't know many folk here... - yo' may come if yo' like' (Gaskell, 1987: 74). Margaret's unfamiliarity with the northern division of the middle-class and working-class allows her to challenge and traverse normative class categorisations from within the domestic sphere.

Margaret's domestic, feminised compassion and feudal southern tendencies allow her to build a meaningful relationship with the Higgins family, and ultimately provides Mr. Thornton with a practical example of compassion and empathy between the opposing classes. These class antagonisms are remedied when, on Margaret's suggestion, Mr. Higgins requests Mr. Thornton for employment. Mr. Higgins' request leads Mr. Thornton, overcome with empathy for his employees, to shed his profit-driven industrialist instincts, leading to the effective end of the strike and resolution of Milton's class-conflict. In reflecting on his past actions towards Higgins and the workers, Mr. Thornton becomes 'conscious of his own irritability of temper at the time', and he comes to understand that 'all men should recognise his justice' and 'tenderness' (Gaskell, 1987: 324). The language that Thornton uses here is highly feminised and influenced by Margaret's feminine 'language of increasingly psychological complexity for understanding individual behaviour' (Eliot, 1994: 25). Due to her conforming to the gender norms of Victorian society, Margaret is able to use her domestic language as the cornerstone for Mr. Thornton's progression in becoming a 'Captain of Industry' (Carlyle, 2018: 58). It is through Margaret that Mr. Thornton is able to stitch together the mutual protection and loyalty of the vertical class structure, and the unforgiving capitalism of the horizontal class structure, thus settling disparities between the working and middle classes, a disparity that 'can be redeemed only through self-sacrifice and earnest devotion – qualities typically realised through submission to romantic love for a woman who realises those virtues' (Adams, 2005: 55). Margaret's conformity to her feminine role as 'The Angel of the House' (Dever, 2005: 169) is the cause of reconciliation between the 'productive union of masculine and feminine, aristocracy and bourgeoisie, industrial north and agricultural south' (Levine, 2012: 97).

CONCLUSION

In both *North and South* and *She*, the categorisation of female sexuality as a 'system of utility' is instrumental for the upkeep of broader social structures in Britain, in order to overturn the norm that saw 'the very characteristics that had placed other people outside of the middle-class culture [reappear] at its core' (Armstrong, 2000: 121). In *North and South*, Margaret Hale submits to the gendered ideology of the separate spheres and takes her place as the virtuous wife to Mr. Thornton. The taming of her sexuality into the private sphere is ultimately for 'the greater good of all' (Foucault, 1978: 24); her gendered language and empathy, both exercised from the place in the domestic sphere, prove to be invaluable in resolving the class antagonism between the vertical aristocratic system and the horizontal cash-nexus system (Carlyle, 2018: 58). On the other hand, Ayesha's

dictatorial femininity threatens the social structure of British imperialism, and her hyper-sexual nature fails to redeem Horace Holly's effeminacy; ultimately, therefore, as her sexuality is untameable and she is unwilling to conform to Victorian gender categories, she is discarded, once again, for 'the greater good of all' (Foucault, 1978: 24) in British society.

Similarly, the distinct polarisation of female sexuality into the binaries of 'Angel of the House' and *Femme Fatale*, respectively reflects the purpose of Margaret's sexuality to help *reconstruct* Victorian social orders versus Ayesha's desire to *deconstruct* British social structures. These novels' ability to produce 'a range of violations and resistance with corresponding consequences capable of reverberating across the entire system of social categories' (Armstrong, 2000: 122) pushed the Victorian fixation with maintaining order to value feminine sexuality only insofar as it conforms to these ideals and helps to further serve broader national prerogatives. As such, by establishing a tension between normative gender roles and social utility, Gaskell and Haggard helped establish 'the pervasive set of cultural rules with which we are living to this day' (Armstrong, 2000: 122). Overall, to achieve equilibrium in Victorian society, female sexuality must either be

unequivocally tamed, restrained, and disciplined – or destroyed, eradicated, and annihilated.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank Michal Shimonovich from the Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow for the supervision and mentorship throughout the duration of this project. Thank you also to Dr. Emily-Marie Pacheco for peer-reviewing this article, as well as to Dr. Andrew Struan, Dr. Scott Ramsey and Dr. Maxinne Connolly-Panagopoulos from the University of Glasgow's Learning Enhancement & Academic Development Service for the opportunity to publish this paper and the guidance and support provided throughout this process. Further credit goes to Grace Curtis, Dr. Violetta Hionidou and Dr. Graham Mooney for the numerous proof-reads.

A final thanks must be extended to Dr. Dustin Friedman of American University in Washington, D.C.; this research would not have been possible without his unparalleled dedication and approach to teaching the literatures and histories of gender, sexuality, LGBTQ+ culture and inequality in Higher Education.

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