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Reading (Other)Wise: Transgressing the Rhetoric of Colonization

Anjali Arondekar

So many prophets of doom cry out to our age of a world near its end that it feels itself susceptible to what has never moved it before. Now is the time to present to our age a phenomenon completely interwoven in its substance—to pack it into the baggage of memory, *that hurried actress racing over her lines*, so proud of her accuracies, that overburdened traveler who would transform the lost living into the unknown dead.

(Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*)

In her recent book, *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt introduces the concept of the "contact zone. . .to refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict" (6). For Pratt, a "contact" perspective blurs any distinctions between separate spheres of colonizer and colonized, foregrounding instead the hybrid constitution of the "contact" subject's formation: victimizer and victim, representer and represented, colonizer and colonized. The "contact zone" becomes the scene of struggle over the power of representation. As the colonial process can only construct and legitimize itself through a maintained demarcation of racial, cultural and

economic differences between the colonizers and the colonized, textual products of the "contact zone," such as travel narratives written by Europeans and North Americans, necessarily record, at some level, the tension and anxiety of negotiating this "contact." This essay explores three such travel narratives of Victorian women in India, and focuses on their representation of the English empire from within the space of their contested positionality, defined both through its foreignness and its female authorship. In the travelogues of these three women, India, in its textual avatar, unfolds as a representative aporia, resisting capture within the totalizing strokes of colonial representation.¹ Conceived, instead, neither completely through the eyes of the English, nor completely through the eyes of the colonized Indians, or both at the same time, I will argue that the colonial experience in the writings of the three Victorian women derails and defamiliarizes the dominant rhetoric of colonization.

Homi Bhabha, in a related context, points specifically to the discursive slippages and breakdowns within colonial models of representation. In his theorization of the "silence around the colonial truth," Bhabha unweaves the elaborate web of cultural lies that lays embedded in the language of most imperial texts, such as these Victorian women's travel narratives. For Bhabha, in "Articulating the Archaic,"

The threatened loss of meaningfulness in cross-cultural interpretation, is as much a problem of the structure of the signifier as it is a question of cultural codes, that is the experience of other cultures. The issue of interpretation in colonial discourse is. . .the momentous, if momentary, extinction of the recognizable object of culture in the disturbed artifice of its [former] signification. . . . (206)

The encounter of the colonizer with the colonial other, in Bhabha's eyes, serves as a site of fracture within a hierarchy of established significance, rupturing the very ability of colonial discourse to give meaning and validity to the untranslatable, wild meaninglessness of the Other. Such losses, such breaks in meaningfulness can be read as examples of what Dominick LaCapra calls "textualized reminders," a surplus of signs, usually unread and taken as inconsequential, signifying waste within the larger meaningful structure of colonial truth (36). I find LaCapra's conceptualization of the term, "textualized reminders," especially useful for a reading of these Victorian women's travel narratives as it draws attention to the gendered, marginal status of their narrative voices, when matched against the dominant chorus of male colonial experience.

¹ Jacques Derrida's development of the term "aporia" should also be kept in mind; he points out in *Writing and Difference* that the excess, the irresolvability within texts is often posed/conceived as an aporia.

Drawn out also is the very text-limited/"textualized" and constructed nature of these women's articulation; it is no small coincidence that these "textualized reminders" appear buried within traditionally domestic genres such as personal journals and letters, all discursive mediums used primarily by the three Victorian women to describe appropriately feminine, and thus inconsequential matters. Aided by a movement from Pratt's "contact space", to Bhabha's scene of signification, to LaCapra's focus on markers in the text, I thus investigate the travel writings of three Victorian women in search of such "textualized reminders" which, though often explicitly "orientalist", exhibit a vivid and complicated responsiveness to many elements of the colonial experience.

This paper is also self-conscious of its conception, given the tendentious question of critical methodologies, such as mine, and gendered material, such as the writings of these women, and the problems of such an interface, or "contact." I suppose the question of "what can be done" with the female colonial text cannot be exhausted in any interpretative gesture, historical or literary. A paper like this one attempts to relay the extent and politics of the problem of the female colonial text which, though anchored historically to a dominant hegemonic position, still reflects discursively a certain constrained and conflicted subjectivity. The discourse of the three Victorian women's texts functions partially, for me, within a Foucauldian paradigm, wherein any discursive formation, among other definitions, is always : "the formation of objects, the formation of enunciative modalities, the formation of concepts, the formation of strategies" (31-39). Given this definition, Foucault asks the reader to remember that what is being reported always occupies a subject position, and that the reporting/reading of that report must, in turn, also always designate a certain subject position. My own critical reading of these texts that report/recount a certain her-story treats the discourse of these texts as a function of the women's existence. The travelogues act as registers of the women's experiences, recording within their prose the constitutive elements of the women's lives.

These women, like me, become readers of an alien context; they, as British women, attempt to read the presence of a recognizable yet "foreign" landscape, just as I, as a post-colonial, attempt to read the configuration of a colonial yet "foreign" discursive formation. Uncannily, we enjoy, to some extent, similar conditions of reading; the Victorian women have been equipped with a pre-sorted reading of India prior to their arrival which impinges on and colors their re-reading, just as I, too, within my cultural context, have an extra-textual view of their ideological formation. More precisely, the women refer repeatedly to the incongruity between the impressions of India that they have internalized through their consumption of popular literature and the India they see around them, hence my emphasis on their re-reading the India they purport to know. Similarly, I too must battle with the critical impulse to read these women as emancipatory heroines and adventuresses, despite the contradictory evidence of their unglamorous and very domestic English existence. This self-reflexive

process is crucial in that it continually poses issues of contemporary values in the examination of past value systems, complicated by my desire to find resistance when, often, I actually face complicity. Critical scholarship that has evolved over the past few years has further made each of us, whether white and European/North American, or representatives of the formerly colonized and culturally dominated, approach the study of Western women and imperialism as part of a process of studying "ourselves among others." The three Victorian women's texts I have chosen to study certainly initiate this process and provide strategic challenges to the conventions of imperial discourse.

One of the effects of the English colonial presence in India, especially during the Victorian period, was to create a marriage market for well-bred, single women in straitened circumstances, who were often sent by their economically burdened families to marry English soldiers and civil servants. A victim of this marriage market is Mary Blane. What are often overlooked are the conditions within which women such as Mary Blane lived, even after the death of their husbands, either in India, or elsewhere. Other more fortunate women, like the vicereine, Lady Dufferin, faced fewer hardships and led lives of unabashed luxury, serving as glorified consorts for their husbands, such as the Lord Viceroy. Adding to the number of traveling ladies are also those such as Emily Eden who accompanied her brother, Lord Auckland, the appointed Governor-General, on a three year public relations mission through the Indian countryside. All three women, despite their differing class positions, meticulously record their experiences in the form of journal entries and letters which are written explicitly for a familial audience in the home they have left behind. Their writings are thus intended as signs to be disseminated in England. That these writings did indeed contribute to and perhaps re-figure notions of the "Other/foreign" through their female voices can be inferred through their successful circulation in travel journals, newspapers, parish newsletters in England, all print media consumed by different sections of the English reading public.

Within the limited framework of this paper, I have chosen to downplay the much discussed "orientalist" nature of the women's colonial ideology, leaving it aside as an evaluation that seems monolithic and inadequate to the challenge of approaching the complexity of their colonial experience. "Orientalist" readings of these narratives do however seem ostensibly consonant with the historical, political and cultural context of Victorian England, such as a comment gleaned from Mary, a.k.a. Minnie, Blane :

It is all very well to talk of going to India, but I believe few would undertake the voyage did they know the disagreeables attendant upon it. All my romantic ideas are fled, that is certain and I am not trying to prejudice you. (Vansittart 38)

or one similarly scathing comment from Emily Eden:

In short, just what people say of India, you know it all, but it is pretty to see; and I mean the 'moral' of my Indian experience to be, that it is the most picturesque population with the ugliest scenery ever put together. (11)

These comments articulate the expected and spring no surprises on the minds of contemporary readers, neither of their time, or of ours. In the wake of Said's *Orientalism*, we are cognizant of the exploitation of the orient, and its construction within Western literature and colonial ideology, making the Victorian women's comments serve as only added fuel to a well-lit fire. The colonial experience has been rendered perverse in our re-working of its warped "orientalist" logic, but rarely from the vantage point of the colonizing subject. In other words, much has been said about what the English, "the colonizers," did to the Indians, "the colonized," and not enough about what they, "the colonizers," did to themselves. I will argue that making such a shift would reveal a certain internal absurdity within the colonial project that would cripple any notions of a "legitimate" colonization. That is, to borrow a term from Homi Bhabha, if colonial truth/meaning is revealed to exist alongside a "colonial non-sense" laden with "textualized reminders," then surely such a contradiction is bound to disrupt, if not destroy completely, the myth of a civilizing, and thus coherent, colonization. If the monolith of colonial authority is shown to be ridden with the same or an-other fracturing malaise of meaninglessness as the one that characterizes the colonized native, then its distinguishing structure collapses, rendering it dysfunctional and illogical. The ironic connectedness of the colonizer and colonized emerges where the myth of the savage native lies within the very cultural authority that defines it, problematizing the very concept of "otherness."²

Minnie Blane, a common officer's wife who lived in India between 1849-1861, presents us with one such "textualized reminder" that pushes us literally to the edge of the colonial experience. In her emotional and often tedious outbursts to her mother via regular letters, Minnie communicates her growing apprehension with her situation. Displaced from the quiet murmur of an English existence to the strident babble of a colonial life, Minnie finds herself on an isolated army settlement in Jhelum, in Northern India, surrounded by a community almost entirely composed of men. During Minnie's stay in India, the English civilizing mission had already sustained a severe blow with the onslaught of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. It was only after the 1857 rebellion that India was taken out of the control of the East India Company and officially placed under the colonial rule of Queen Victoria. Yet Minnie's reaction to even

²Sartre, in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, calls such an interconnectedness "a relentless reciprocity binding colonizer to colonized."

such an extended and politically significant rebellion from the "natives" is ostensibly uncritical of the English presence in India; as she says: "Is this not enough to appall (sic) officers who have been toiling here for years, treating the natives kind (sic) and then this is the return they get. It is quite abominable" (83). Her letters from this time reveal an odd, perplexing juxtaposition of narrative strains that convey Minnie's unconscious dis-ease with her situation. On one hand, vast brutalities of the Indian mutiny are described through graphic remarks such as:

The atrocities are awful at Delhi and Meerut, poor little infants and children were thrown into the air and received back on spears, and ladies first had their clothes set on fire, their breasts cut off, and then hewed in pieces. Can anything be more dreadful, more revolting? (91)

While, on the other hand, any strong feeling stemming from the violence done to the Europeans is quickly doused through Minnie's ensuing description of prosaic details such as her painful attack of "piles" [hemorrhoids], her continuous fevers, and her numerous periods of diarrhea, all of which principally afflict her during the incidents and aftermath of the Indian mutiny. In other words, as more horrifying descriptions of other "ladies. . .[with] their breast[s] cut off, and then hewed into pieces" flood Minnie's letters, so also do equally elaborate and graphic descriptions of her bodily ailments. The discursive juxtaposition of these narrative instances betrays Minnie's complicated reaction to the situation around her, a reaction that represses the violent "non-sense", the ostensible break-down of the colonial system outside of her, and instead rechannels that reaction into a perverse fascination with and sensitivity to her own body.³

Minnie Blane's further subversive critique comes not through a critique of English public life, but through her discontent with the domestic arrangements for the English in India, an area that she, as the "angel of the house", feels authorized to comment on. As Mary Louise Pratt reminds us:

The predicable fact that domestic settings have a much more prominent presence in the women's travel accounts than in the men's (where one is hard-pressed indeed to find even an interior description of a house) is a matter not just of differing spheres of interest or expertise, then, but of modes of constituting knowledge and subjectivity. (159)

³Within a related psychoanalytical context, Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, suggests that the Other is associated with excess, garbage, pain, abjection. Witnessing these representations of the Other, the woman, realizing she herself is Other, begins to appropriate them in relation to herself.

The domestic space becomes the familiar, controlled or controllable space within which the women travelers can sustain the disruption of any "foreign" occurrence, and also, as Pratt says, a safe haven from which to sally forth into the fray. Minnie goes through three laborious pregnancies, or "confinements" in Victorian parlance, within the space of seven years. It is at the onset of her first "confinement" that she makes this disconcerting entry, off-handedly, almost as an aside, with no added emphasis.

I have secured the services of a most excellent [European] nurse for my approaching confinement. . . . Our great comfort is that she drinks neither wine, beer nor spirits of any kind. *So many of these women do so at excess.* (53, emphasis added)

This casual reference to the drinking habits of her female European counterparts in the Indian colony opens up a field of signification that is never again touched upon. Minnie complains endlessly of the "disgusting habits" (51) of the natives, rarely providing anything but a wholesome picture of the English as hygienic and disciplined examples of a superior culture. Her reference to the "excess", the alcoholism of the women in the colonies alludes to the non-rational and "non-sensical" side of an English woman's existence. Sara Suleri, in her work on the extensive body of journals, memoirs, letters and fiction written by Anglo-Indian women, offers a partial explanation and suggests that such "excesses", for women especially, are indicative of the women's positionality within the Indian landscape:

Living on an elite island that was nevertheless rife with domestic politics, hysterically conscious of how much protection was necessary, the Anglo-Indian woman persistently became a symbolic casualty to the deranging cost of colonial power. . . where the psychic strains of self-censorship were far more the burden of the Anglo-Indian female than of the male. If the latter had the bureaucracy of the Raj to supply a semblance of narrative coherence to his Indian sojourn, the former was granted very little stability. (75)

For Minnie, armed as she has been, with an artillery of romantic notions about the colonial process, such disruptions must remain at the level of "textualized reminders," hidden behind the safe, bland surface dictating the flavor of her expression. Indeed, for Minnie to survive, and to continue circulating a version of civilized English domesticity, this "excess", this surplus of signs, must not be foregrounded lest it speak of an ominous dis-ease, of a disruption that mocks the civilizing "sanity" of the English. Minnie's survival techniques must have worked, for despite her subsequent divorce from her first husband Archie and

her departure to England, we are told that she remarried a second English officer much like Archie and returned to India.

The moral vulgarity of Minnie's prose differs sharply from the more "gentile" class-conscious observations of Lady Harriet Dufferin's journals. Given the public position of her husband, Lady Dufferin's ostensible support of the English presence in India is necessarily more marked than Minnie Blane's. Lady Dufferin, who lived in Bengal between 1884-88 with her husband, the Lord Viceroy, spends much time playing "guest of honor" at various missionary schools in her district. As I read through her exhaustively detailed journals, I was struck by her fetishization of the dolls which she is meant to hand out as prizes to the hard-working 'native' students in the schools. After one such incident of prize-distribution, she writes:

I grieve to say that symptoms of European custome (sic) are to be seen amongst them. I had just dealth (sic) out a reward or a bribe to a real little Oriental picture, when a horrid calico frock of purely English pattern appeared before me!! And alas! . . . Is it not dreadful?--jewels, and green and gold garments wound around crimson, muslin, and then striped cotton stockings and shoes. These atrocities are sent out by kind people at home. I wish they would get patterns of Indian garments, and make them both for the children and the dolls! Unfortunately the latter are manufactured with chignons and boots, and I suppose they can't be bought without them. (Dufferin 53)

Clothes, in this case, those wrapped around these absurd English dolls, and those manifested in the "calico frock[s]" of the children, suggest perhaps Lady Dufferin's own anxiety about the English civilizing mission in India. There is a distinct uncomfortableness experienced by Lady Dufferin as she sees the natives reproduce, in a gesture of grotesque colonial mimicry, a purely English pattern within a different "little Oriental picture." The dolls, with their English presence, seem to her out of place in the hands of these Oriental children. Even more destabilizing for the Vicereine is the sight of the Oriental children re-figured/dis-figured as uncanny images of the dolls, in their conversion to "crimson" and "muslin." For her, Indians should wear "Indian garments" and play with Indian dolls, and not indulge in what she calls the "atrocious" of colonial mimicry. Comments and reactions such as the Vicereine's, I want to suggest, contain disruption and a kernel of striking colonial "non-sense," as they suggest that re-dressing the native nature in the garb of a civilizing English ideology can only re-produce such absurdities as the modified "little Oriental picture" with her "jewels, and green and gold garments wound around crimson, muslin, and then striped cotton stockings and shoes."

Again, these comments, like those of Minnie Blane, characterize a "feminine" observation, in this case about dress, an observation that Lady

Dufferin accommodates as typical of her "frivolous feminine way" (47) and thus do not overtly attack the colonial presence.⁴ Lady Dufferin may not address the "common" tasks of finding suitable midwives as Minnie does, but, instead, given her class difference, she underlines her horror at the "shabby finery" she sees the natives wearing. It is within this "frivolous feminine" discourse that we find additional comments that belabor Lady Dufferin's anxiety over the issue of native dress:

With education, unfortunately, comes a taste for English millinery, and a departure from the good taste generally inherent to a national costume, and I could really groan when princess frocks, marabout feathers, and other shabby finery are flaunted before me. . . many a foot of native arrangement was displayed under the European varnish as the unfortunate wearer struggled up on to the platform. It gave me time however to consider the costume question fully, and to come to even stronger opinions upon the subject than I had held before: Why should we introduce into this country the crochet and woolwork of which we are so sick at home? But, we do, and take trouble to din it into the fingers of these poor children instead of encouraging their own beautiful embroideries. (81)

What is interesting in these lines, what perhaps makes Lady Dufferin "really groan," is not so much the imitation of the English custom, but the non-identical, almost farcical mimicry that results. Surplus cultural signs such as "crochet" and "woolwork" are disseminated to construct an image of the cultural originator that seems artificial even to its own producers. The "costume question" when considered "fully" becomes a symptom of a colonial process that clothes its own presence "so sick[ly]." Undercutting Lady Dufferin's observations, ultimately, is a form of acute self-questioning, inevitably emerging from the converting culture's own structured demand for imitation and identification. Colonial mimicry, as manifested in these "not quite/not white" presentations, strongly blurs and confuses the Vicereine's perception of the boundaries that mark off the English from the Indians. In short, the English may wish to be used as a model of cultural perfection, but when imitations of that model actually begin to take place, the perfection appears paradoxically both venerated and violated.

Lastly, I examine the journals of Emily Eden, who visits India between 1835-1839 and whose writings differ from those of the other two women. I place Eden last, even though she chronologically appears much earlier, primarily

⁴Interestingly enough, one of the rallying calls of the Indian Independence movement was a call to burn English-made clothes, and to be Indian, and wear Indian, to be "Swadeshi." Hence, the introduction of Gandhi's famous "chakra" or spinning wheel as a national symbol, urging Indians to spin their own cloth.

because she functions as a contemporary "expert" commentator, providing an interesting overview of the colonial situation in India. Eden, aware that she is in India only for a short four years, wastes little time in addressing quotidian domestic details and endeavors to provide her nephew (the recipient of her journals) with a totalizing picture of India. In his essay "The Semiotics of Tourism" Jonathan Culler argues that experiences such as Eden's must be examined in terms of her role as an agent of semiotics, who is engaged in reading cities, landscapes and cultures as sign systems. Eden ventures constantly into hazardous generalizations, displaying through their totalizing logic the very programmatic and unstable nature of the sign-systems she is trying to construct. Cultural signs that lend themselves to her system of signification are quickly seized upon with relieved comments: "Finally, this looks more like the "land of the east", in all its ways than anything we have seen" (22). These lines reflect a search for a gratifyingly familiar signification, and the imagined "land of the east" provides the only reification of Emily Eden's colonial truth.

Such "land of the east" quests, however, rarely yield the desired results for Emily, as she constantly questions the illogical and baffling reasoning behind the English presence, especially in terms of religious habits:

It was odd and rather awful to think that sixty Christians should be worshipping God on this desert, which is not their home, and that 12,000 false worshippers should be standing round under the orders of these few Christians. (23)

Eden, through such observations, ventures so far as to qualify religious indoctrination as "rather awful." Twelve thousand colonized or "false worshippers" to sixty, colonizing Christians indeed constructs an "odd" if not powerful image of a grossly disproportional, English ruling class. This is not to suggest, even partially, that Eden professes an extreme anti-colonial or anti-Christian view, as she, through the testimony of her journals, articulates no further concerns with such potentially subversive subjects. Her estimation of the natives is no different from that of her colonizing counterparts, as she finds them a "submissive set of people" (18), easy to conquer. She similarly expresses no sympathy for the indigenous culture or language: "Somehow a detestation of the Hindustani language sounding all around us, came over me in a very inexplicable manner" (54). What these views do, with their complaining and puzzled tone, is stridently underline the *unheimlich*, the ambivalently not-at-home but most-at-home elements of the English presence.⁵ The English, in their concerted attempts to recreate a microcosm of English society around

⁵I draw this notion of the *unheimlich* from Freud's brilliant essay on the subject where he points to the blurring of boundaries between the sense of home, and of not-at-homeness as understood through the etymology of this very layered German word. Cf. Freud, "Das Unheimliche."

themselves, clearly manifest the effects of such a contracted and "contacted" enterprise. Factors beyond their penetration, such as the babble of the "Hindustani language," seep into their sanitized cells of Englishness, tainting the very solidity of their colonial enterprise. The "contact zone" appears literally within the space of this colonial encounter.

In other places in her journal, Emily Eden's uncanny prophetic reach also arrestingly implicates modern readers such as myself, and it is at moments such as these that Emily Eden's "contact perspective" and mine overlap. Traveling with her brother, Emily Eden is struck by the grueling poverty she sees around her, in comparison to the flamboyant opulence with which her brother and his entourage travel. And so she writes, again in a letter to her nephew:

An odd world certainly! Perhaps two thousand years hence, when the art of steam has been forgotten, and nobody can exactly make out the meaning of the of English word "mail-coach", some black Governor-General of England will be marching through its southern provinces, and will go and look at some ruins, and doubt whether London ever was a large town, and will feed some white-looking skeletons, and say what distress the poor creatures must be in; they will really eat rice and currey; and his sister will write to her Mary D. at New Delhi, and complain of the cold, and explain to her with great care what snow is, and how the natives wear bonnets. (67)

These lines contain a virulent inversion of colonial logic, an inversion that ultimately marks and hopefully justifies my desire to shift the focus from the colonized to the colonizers. The Victorian woman's stay in the "contact zone" has eroded any intrinsic notions of English superiority; in this instance, Emily Eden has replaced the English colonizers with their Indian counterparts, making colonization a mere hegemonic accident, unconnected to issues of race or religion. She seems to suggest that if today the English are powerful, it is equally likely that once having learned or successfully mimicked the colonizing process, the power structure could shift, making the English, the colonized, and the Indians, the colonizers. Examples such as the condition of the "natives" as "white-looking skeletons" mock the sheer arbitrariness of the colonial meaning-making process. That is, if European "natives" can evoke pity ("poor creatures") and be reduced to the level of pathetic "skeletons" by the likes of some nameless "black Governor-General," any effort to equate race with strength appears futile. Here, it is the much-touted "civilizing" nature of the colonial process that is being undermined; regardless of the color of the colonizing Governor-General, the result, as Emily Eden's little vignette points out, lies always in "ruins." Yet, even such a seemingly outrageous observation is as always framed within a sanctioning "frivolous, feminine way." The "poor creatures" are described by their changed eating habits, "rice and currey," and the inversion of power

structures is explained through signs of dress such as "how the natives wear bonnets." As always, when one speaks from a separated historical moment, there seems to be a problem about how one should read this trope: does Emily Eden really mean it, or is her speculation merely a piece of hyperbolic whimsy, designed to arouse a momentary (and possibly pleasurable) frisson of anxiety in the audience, only to have it dismissed with the implicit knowledge of the ludicrous impossibility of such a future. The answer may perhaps be impossible to determine, but determining the possibilities remains a priority, especially as one uncovers variations of this very trope in Conrad's vision of barbarian Britain at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*.

If, as I have tried to demonstrate, colonial ideology is internally unstable, then these women's travelogues do indeed hint at the ambivalent, unwelcome truth of the English empire's lies. Within the pronounced asymmetrical relations of colonialism, even an especially gendered female point of view, such as that furnished by these examples, does not provide a reciprocal relationship with the "Other" but instead reveals a crack in the conception of the colonizing subject/self through which to re-examine the concept of the "Other." The empire appears vulnerable, fragmented and unfamiliar in the eyes of its crusading pioneers, the much fantasized "land of the east" a distant and eroded sign. Homi Bhabha's notion of the "silence around the colonial truth" is eerily foreshadowed by Emily Eden, as she fittingly writes, in reference to the above mentioned scenario: "When I look at either the youth or the worn-out men, and think what India does for all, I really should not venture to say these lines out loud" (83). My interpretative gesture within this essay, attempts to breach such silences, and to articulate "these lines out loud." As a product of the "contact zone", as a post-colonial female subject, I read (Other)wise, and attempt to recuperate the complicity and resistance within these female colonial texts.

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