

EDITH MATORIN AND THE *WIDE WORLD* MAGAZINE: NEW WOMAN REWRITINGS OF IMPERIAL ADVENTURE

By Sigrid Anderson Cordell

IN A TELLING MOMENT in the 1899 account of her life in India, Edith Maturin describes fighting off a potential attacker who attempts to enter her bedroom in the middle of the night. Because she is staying overnight in a remote cabin, she has only the nominal protection of “the Government-chosen *khansamah* [head servant] and *chokey-dar* [watchman]” (364). Lying awake, she looks up to find “a huge black man” peering in through the door with an “odiously fiendish expression” (364). Having anticipated such an attack, she is armed with her son’s pop gun, and when she spots the intruder, she scares him away by firing it off: “I sat up, took the pistol, and pointed it at him. He saw me distinctly, and ducked as I fired. Then away he went! I put another cap in the toy pistol, and, running to the door, opened it, and fired again and again” (“Chamba Cinderella” 364) (Figure 21).

Published in the *Wide World Magazine*, George Newnes’s illustrated monthly of travel and adventure, this account, and its accompanying illustration, perform some key rhetorical work: in describing a native attacker trying to enter her bedroom, Maturin draws on Gothic motifs to portray herself as a vulnerable heroine; at the same time, her response to this threat underscores her courage and resourcefulness as a New Woman adventurer. The accompanying illustration emphasizes this double move: Maturin’s white nightgown and the image of the shadowy figure suggest vulnerability, whereas her aggressive body language indicates assertiveness and resolve. As this episode reveals, Maturin’s figuration as a brave and unconventional female traveler depends on underscoring the colonial environment of India as physical and sexual threat. Throughout the magazine, similar tales of female adventure combine both the discourse of empire and the gender politics of the New Woman novel, showing how the imaginative space of periodicals, as well as the colonial space itself, presented an opportunity for women writers to capitalize on a ready market and fashion a professional identity as an adventurer. These women’s adventure stories – or, what I term imperial New Woman narratives – are the focus of this essay; in particular, I will argue that periodicals like the *Wide World* participated in a publishing economy in which the colonial landscape of India, and the New Woman’s response to threats within that landscape, were essential commodities.



“I SAT UP, TOOK THE PISTOL, AND POINTED IT AT HIM.”

Figure 21. Paul Hardy, “I sat up, took the pistol, and pointed it at him.” Illustration, from *Wide World Magazine* 3/16 (July 1899): 364.

The *Wide World* regularly published accounts that, like Maturin’s, featured daring white adventurers around the globe under attack by natives and wild animals. While the majority of adventurers in the *Wide World* were white males, the magazine features a striking number of narratives celebrating female adventurers, suggesting that the exotic or colonial space presented an opportunity for white British women like Maturin to demonstrate their capability and to try on new roles. In this way, the magazine’s pages reflect Vron Ware’s assertion that “the Empire provided both a physical and an ideological space in which the different meanings of femininity could be explored or contested” (120). This mode of liberating exploration is not, of course, free of its own embeddedness in racial hierarchies, as Anne McClintock, Antoinette Burton, Jenny Sharpe, Indira Ghose, and others have pointed out. Much attention has been paid in feminist post-colonial studies to women’s narratives of empire and the ways in which travel allowed women to transgress gender norms, while, as Ghose puts it, they were “also implicated in the colonial power structures” (13).¹ In this essay, I build on and extend this work by excavating how the colonial landscape allowed women to construct themselves as professional writers in late Victorian print culture. As I will demonstrate, Maturin’s narratives illuminate an economy of gendered global experience within the publishing industry.

The politics of race, gender, nation, and publication become visible in Maturin’s four-part series of travel narratives, in which the packaging of image and text, as well as colonial

India's threat alongside the New Woman's desire for independence, work together to create a marketable commodity. As Peter Sinnema, Laurel Brake, Marysa Demoor, and Julie Codell have pointed out, considerable work is yet to be done in examining periodical print culture, especially the ways in which images and text work together to create meaning.² In the case of Maturin's narratives, it would be impossible to read these texts and the paratextual elements surrounding them without noting the interconnections across race, class, and gender that Ghose and others have pointed to; as presented in the magazine, Maturin's feminist identity is inextricably linked to her imperial identity. Maturin entered a crowded field of women's travel narratives and carved out a space for herself by relentlessly presenting herself as a combination of social rebel and romantic heroine, all the while drawing on familiar narratives of the racial other, including the trope of the white British heroine stalked by a dark-skinned native. Throughout her narratives, Maturin revels in the dangers found in the Indian landscape and boasts of her bravery in facing both human and animal threats.

Before examining the crafting of Maturin as an imperial New Woman, it is important to understand how her work fits into the late-nineteenth century British publishing context as well as how her work compares to that of other women writers in the *Wide World*. The late nineteenth century was an especially fruitful period for adventure narratives, and wildly popular titles by Haggard, Stevenson, and Stoker testify to the public demand for stories featuring male adventurers venturing into remote parts of the world. Likewise, travel narratives, both by male and female writers, found an audience and offered a broad scope for women both to share their experiences and find a ready publishing outlet. Prominent women adventurers who published accounts of their experiences include Mary Kingsley, Lady Anna Brassey, Isabella Bird, and the Canadian Sarah Jeannette Duncan. Likewise, authors like Flora Annie Steel created a publishing career out of writing about colonial India, both in advice books like *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1887) and in novels like *On the Face of the Waters* (1896), which takes place during the 1857 Indian Mutiny. The British public's enthusiasm for travel narratives and adventure stories coincided with the height of the British Empire. At the same time, as Stephen Arata has argued, colonial adventure narratives expressed the anxieties of an overstretched empire.³

Capitalizing on the popularity of travel narratives and adventure stories, as well as his success with *Tit Bits* and the *Strand*, George Newnes founded the *Wide World*, subtitled *An Illustrated Monthly of True Narrative*, in April 1898. The opening issue touted both the bizarre nature of the travel narratives within its pages and their absolute veracity, a veracity that it claimed to back up with the relatively new technology of mass-produced photographic evidence. As the "Introduction" to the first issue declared, "The key-note of the Magazine is struck in the motto on the cover – 'Truth is Stranger than Fiction.' This we hope to prove by personal narratives and actual photographs . . . There will be no fiction in the Magazine, but yet it will contain stories of weird adventure, more thrilling than any conceived by the novelist in his wildest flights" (3). By the fourth volume, the magazine included a map that plotted out the locations of all the articles in an issue and illustrated the magazine's global reach (Figure 22). Circulation figures for the magazine grew as a result of publishing the sensationalized adventures of Louis de Rougemont, whose serialized account of his twenty years among the aborigines of Australia, subtitled "the most amazing story a man ever lived to tell," began in August 1898 (451). De Rougemont was later exposed as a fraud, and the editor's decision to continue running the serial called the magazine's commitment to non-fiction into question; however, according to Frank Clune, De Rougemont's narrative

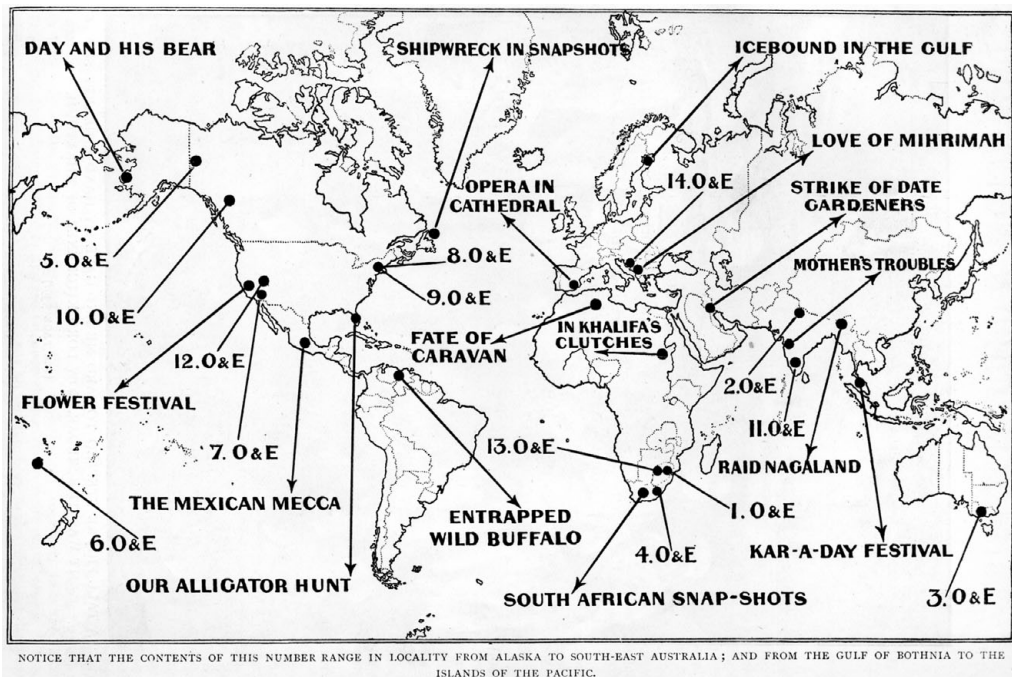


Figure 22. Map reproduced in *Wide World Magazine*. 4.23 (February 1900): np.

expanded the magazine's readership as "the thrilled adventure-devourers of five continents eagerly awaited the next month's gripping installments" (13).⁴

Despite its billing itself as "absolutely new in conception," the *Wide World's* presentation of the world outside England relied on well-worn images of the exotic Other (Advertisement 3). As the *Morning Post* complained, "Some of the 'wonders' so profusely photographed are very far from fresh in our illustrated periodicals. The Indian Fakirs, for example, have become absolutely wearisome from their repeated appearances" ("Literary Notes" 2). Margaret Stetz has pointed out that, while the journal paid attention to new technologies like photography, its "true" accounts adhered very closely to the Gothic tradition, which, in the imperial context, "taught British readers . . . that the figure of the male 'native,' wherever he was found, was usually animalistic, evil, murderous, potentially cannibalistic, and altogether monstrous – was, in effect, a Gothic monster" (27). Indeed, many of the accounts that appeared in the journal presented non-white natives around the globe threatening or openly attacking white adventurers. For example, in "Down the Perak River: A True Story," a tale billed as "serv[ing] to illustrate the dangers and difficulties Empire-builders have to encounter," a British official in the Federated Malay States describes his escape from a group of natives attempting to resist British authority (12). The accompanying illustration shows his predecessor moments before his death from "a terrific blow over the head with a sword" (13) (Figure 23). The native's stance presents him as the aggressor, visually suggesting the threat of native violence against the unsuspecting British administrator. The administrator's air of

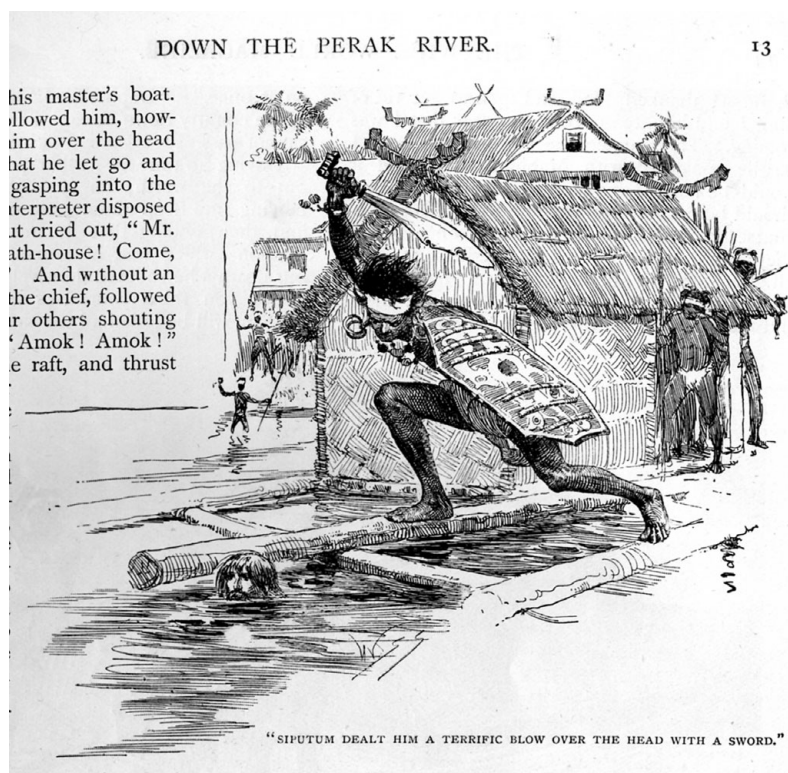


Figure 23. W.S. Stacey, "Siputum dealt him a terrific blow over the head with a sword." Illustration from *Wide World Magazine* 1/1 (Apr. 1898): 13.

unconcern contrasts markedly with the active posture of the native, caught in the act of raising his sword. Alongside accounts like this one, the pursued female body features prominently in the *Wide World's* pages, as in Maude Crossland's "Experiences of a Somnambulist," where the narrator, a delicate, white British heroine visiting Australia, is pursued in the night by what she calls a black "monster" and encounters what Stetz describes as "a series of entrapments" (38). He chases her through a stream, where she hides, screams in terror, and faints, only to wake in the arms of her rescuer, a fatherly colonial administrator (38). The accompanying illustration of the cringing white heroine trapped by a wild-haired and wild-eyed "monster" – his aggressive body language almost forcing her out of the frame – reinforces an image of unprotected white femininity under attack (Figure 24).

While Crossland's narrative presents a traveler in peril consistent with tropes that run throughout the magazine, hers is not wholly representative of the *Wide World's* vision of British womanhood. Indeed, the magazine features an array of women travelers and settlers who embrace the challenges and adventure offered by life in far-flung locations, suggesting that the adventure narrative was a fruitful space for demonstrating one's New Womanhood. In one account, for example, a young woman living in India finds a murderous tiger in her bedroom. While the tiger is busy devouring her pet mastiff, she sneaks up and shoots him



“ HE COMMENCED WADING TOWARDS ME.”

Figure 24. W.S. Stacey, “He commenced wading towards me.” Illustration from *Wide World Magazine* 2/9 (Dec. 1898): 345.

with a revolver. As a result of her bravery, she is treated as a heroine by the villagers, who are deeply grateful that she has rid the neighborhood of a threat. In the tradition of tiger hunting, the villagers present her with the skin, singing in her honor, “Bring forth blossoms, put them on white woman’s head/she killed man-eater: Burra Bagh is dead” (Marshall 484). Far from the protected heroine of Crossland’s tale, this narrator is celebrated for her bravery. The pages of the *Wide World* are full of similar stories that represent extraordinary moments in which women take on the role of heroine or adventurer. Looked at in the broader context of the magazine, and the late nineteenth-century publishing world, these stories reveal the ways in which travel presented opportunities for women writers both to explore new roles and to find a publishing outlet.

Alongside articles detailing daring adventures, the magazine also celebrated the tribulations and successes of women attempting to maintain middle-class British households in foreign lands. For example, “A Mother’s Trials in India” by Mrs. E. M. Stewart points to the many dangers faced by British families trying to live in India and highlights Stewart’s sense of being under siege by the colonial landscape. In this story, Stewart describes the challenges of protecting her family, in particular her two children, from the manifold threats that they experience while living in India, such as when a cobra enters the house. To elevate the tale’s sense of peril, the story is accompanied by a photo of Stewart’s two angelic-looking children, implying that they are defenseless innocents who must be protected, as well as an illustration

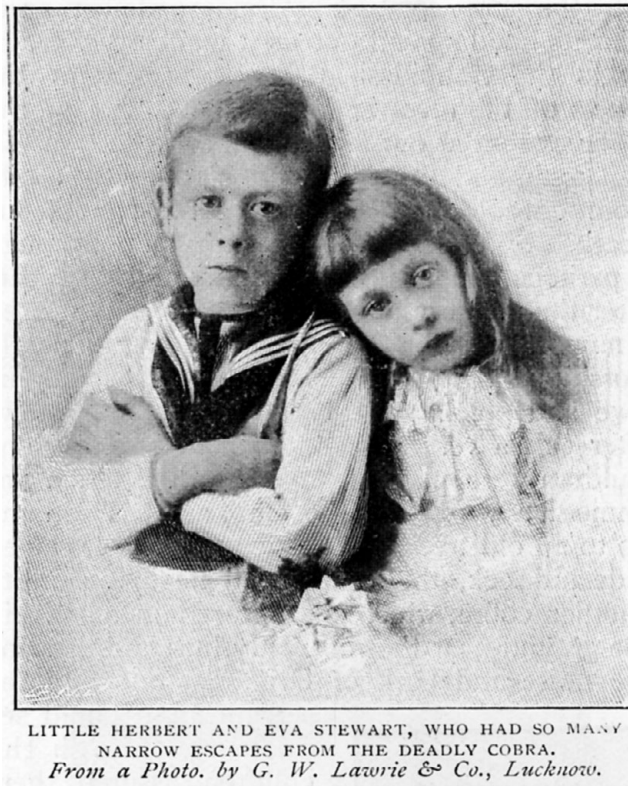


Figure 25. “Little Herbert and Eva Stewart, who had so many narrow escapes from the deadly cobra.” Photograph by G.W. Lawrie & Co., Lucknow. *Wide World Magazine* 4/23 (Feb. 1900): 603.

of the terrified narrator standing on a table watching as a group of men try to subdue the snake (Figures 25 and 26). Stories such as this one emphasize the central role that women played in domesticating the colonial landscape, as well as the importance of maintaining a British household regardless of the location. In fact, the *Wide World* repeatedly reports on the efforts of British women working to insulate their families from the dangers and chaos of the colonial environment, such as in “Our First Dinner Party in India,” in which Mrs. C. E. Phillimore describes an evening that went disastrously awry because of her servants’ refusal to adhere to British standards. The story opens with her assigning blame to the native servants who had failed to live up to her expectations: “Never shall I forget that evening eleven or twelve years ago! Never shall I forgive that wretched cook and Butler” (181). Her overwrought language suggests that, even after many years, the failure of this dinner party, and its attendant symbolism as a mainstay of both British society and well-ordered domesticity, represents a crisis. Furthermore, she blames the catastrophe on “that wretched cook and Butler” who were unable to meet her standards.

Maturin’s narratives participate in this print economy of physical and social threat by presenting the writer as a romantic heroine under siege, while at the same time emphasizing

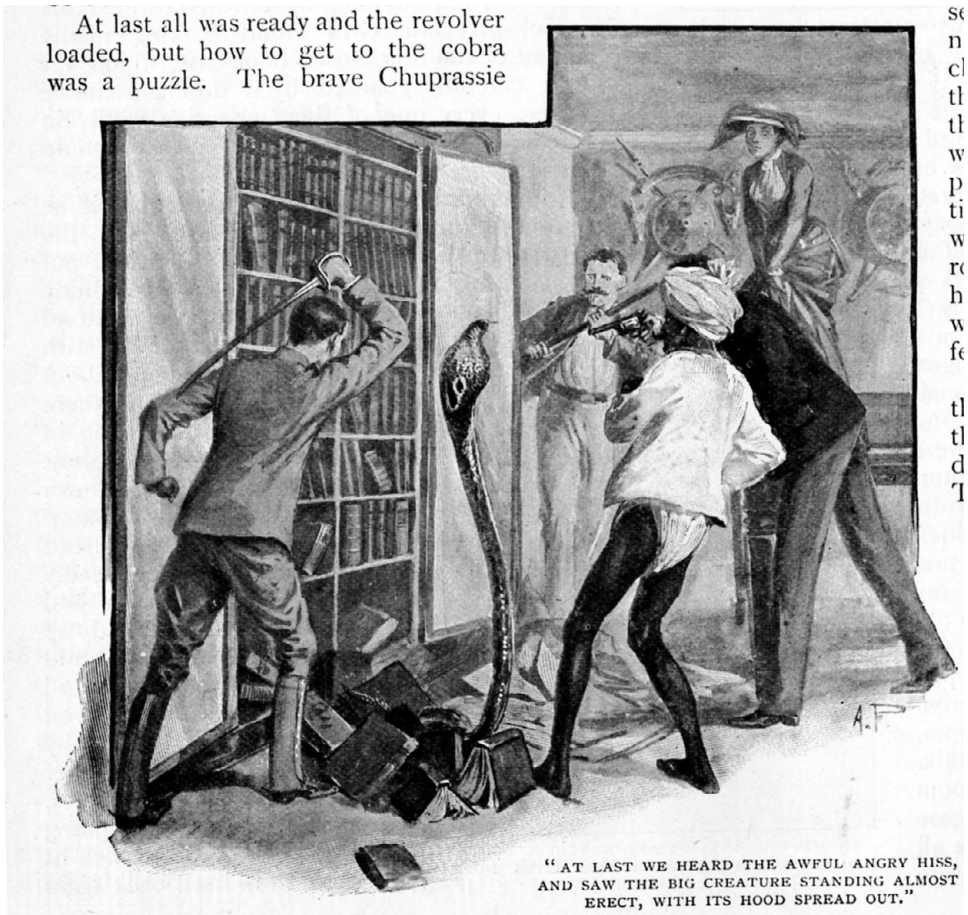


Figure 26. Arthur Pearse, “At last we heard the awful angry hiss, and saw the big creature standing almost erect, with its hood spread out.” Illustration from *Wide World Magazine* 4/23 (Feb. 1900): 604.

her role as a social rebel. Both the text of her stories and the paratextual materials surrounding them – including editorial introductions, romanticized line drawings, and highly stylized theatrical photographs of the author – create and market an image of Maturin as an imperial New Woman heroine. Although it is unlikely that Maturin had control over how her work was packaged in the *Wide World*, its presentation stands out, even within the context of the magazine, implying a distinct editorial choice to market her in this way. Through these texts and paratexts, she is branded as an imperial New Woman, and this image draws on a nexus of late nineteenth-century discourses surrounding empire, class, and gender.

Throughout her narratives in the *Wide World*, Maturin presents herself as a resourceful, rebellious character chafing under any sort of authority. She emphasizes her unconventionality, as well as the enthusiasm with which she embraces her adventures. Like many others, Maturin saw the empire as a space of opportunity and freedom from restraint,

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and the landscape of colonial India is key to her New Womanhood. Maturin spent most of her life in either India or South Africa, living first in India with her father, a pioneering tea planter in Assam who, according to her sister Leila, “was the first to avail himself of the offer made by [the] Government at that time of granting free (or for merely nominal sums) large tracts of land for the cultivation of the tea plant” (Boustead 548).⁵ When Maturin was sent back to England during her childhood, she dreamed of returning to India, a place that appeared in her daydreams as a space for adventure where she would be free of the confines of proper British womanhood. As she explains:

All through the dreary years of education and deportment in our grandmother’s dignified home in a quiet part of England we [she and her sister] had talked, and planned, and dreamt of the day when our father would fetch us and take us back to India. While grandmamma, an aunt, and our governess conversed to us of morals, accomplishments, and eternity, *we* pondered on hair-breadth escapes, perilous adventures . . . when the day should come to spread our wings towards the East. (“A Night” 158)

For the young Edith, India represented a space for a kind of dashing heroism that was considered unacceptable for women in England.

However, as Maturin tells the reader, even when she does return to India, she is frustrated by the limitations placed on her by a strict father who had “stiff, old-fashioned ideas as to the ways of young men and maidens” (“Candle” 324). Her father’s moves to insulate her from the threats of both the Indian landscape and the young British officers sent to police it lead her to circumvent his rules and invite adventure. As a result, Maturin frames her adventures as instances of rebellion in which she intentionally courts danger – and, for the most part, finds her own way out of it – precisely because of her impatience with the role of protected heroine. The first installment in her four narratives begins with a dispute with her father over whether she would panic if she came face to face with a tiger. As Precious McKenzie Stearns has pointed out, hunting was a “marker of imperial femininity” for women in India, proving that “they could defend themselves from ferocious Indian wildlife and also the supposed threat posed by hypersexual, immoral Indian men” (24). However, as Maturin complains, “We had been here [in India] five weeks, daily longing to see a tiger or some other murderous animal, but so far hadn’t caught a glimpse of even the tip of a speckled tail” (“A Night” 158). When her father bids her to remain within protected boundaries, she deliberately gets herself and her sister lost so that she will have an opportunity to prove her courage. As a result, they are not only chased by a tiger, but are also caught in a massive jungle fire. The story ends with her expressing satisfaction that she has proven her bravery: “It was many months before papa dared joke us about our man-eater, or call us ‘his heroines’; and when he did, we generally told the story to someone, and had the satisfaction of hearing that, in *their* humble opinion, we had at any rate shown that we had ‘plenty of grit’” (164).

Maturin further emphasizes her refusal to conform to conventional notions of femininity by highlighting her attempts to circumvent limits on her access to male company. In the second narrative, “A Candle in the Window,” Maturin explains that her father severely restricts her opportunities to spend unsupervised time with young men and is “a real martinet with us girls” (324). When, for once, he allows her and her sister to invite two officers to dinner, the girls are horrified when the men are sent away in a rainstorm rather than allowed to stay the night. Since their home is in an isolated area in the Himalayas, “and the only way

home was a lonely, winding, dangerous path of at least four miles,” the girls are terrified that their swains will meet with an accident (326). As a result, they prop open the bathroom door and leave a candle in the window in hopes that it will guide the young men back to the house. The sisters’ plan results in disaster, however, when they awake to find a cheetah in their room. It is not until years later that they confess to their father how they got themselves into this predicament – in fact, they wait until both of them are married to reveal that they had left their back door open so that the young men could sneak in during the night. Unsurprisingly, their father is “deeply shocked, especially because we told it to him with much glee, and not, as he was certain his great-grandmother would have done, ‘with bated breath and blushes’” (330). Far from blushing, Maturin delights in recounting the cause of her adventure.

In this way, Maturin presents herself (and her sister, who has a minor role in most of these narratives) as a rebellious, strong-willed individual, unwilling to be boxed in by ideas of what is safe or proper for a woman. Accompanying Maturin’s descriptions of her frustration with convention and her father’s attempts to protect her, the headnotes to each story offer an additional editorial gloss that presents Maturin as a spirited rebel. These headnotes introduce the reader to Maturin and give a hint less of what type of narrative is to come than of what kind of narrator will be telling it. Kate Jackson asserts that the articles in the *Wide World* are not just about the places that the travelers have been, but are just as much about the travelers themselves. As she points out, narratives in the *Wide World*, like other late nineteenth-century travel narratives, “tended to be . . . autobiographical, containing a substantial element of personal reaction and anecdote, and designed largely to provide entertainment” (171). Jackson’s reading of the anecdotes as revealing more about the authors themselves than anything else is an astute one, especially in light of narratives such as Maturin’s, which foreground her personality and her reactions to the foreign and exotic. We are told, for instance, that the first account is “a personal narrative of the awful plight into which two high-spirited and mischievous English girls got themselves in one of the wildest parts of India” (“Night to Remember” 158). Both Mrs. Maturin and her sister are presented here as not only “high-spirited” and “mischievous,” but also as having gotten themselves into trouble. As Maturin puts it elsewhere, she and her sister were “full of fun . . . [and] a constant torment” (“Candle” 325). Likewise, in the lead-in to the last narrative, the editor explains that “It must be admitted that Mrs. Maturin, as a girl, gave an incredible amount of trouble to all who had charge of her – as this her latest reminiscence amply testifies” (“Ocean” 618). Again, this introduction frames her as high-spirited, even trouble-making, and emphasizes her impulse to resist authority.

While Maturin’s text and the headnotes describe her as unconventional and rebellious, the accompanying photographs present an image of romantic femininity. In Tom Gretton’s analysis of page design in nineteenth-century magazines, he examines how the “logic of illustration” was being worked out in this period (684). In some periodicals, he points out, the “pictures add value not so much to the texts with which they cohabit as to the commodity which supports them both” (684). Although the “commodity” that he refers to is the magazine itself, which is being sold both through the images and the text, it can also refer in this case to the persona of Edith Maturin, who is composed through the juxtaposition of images and text. These photographs present idealized images of Maturin, often in fancy dress, as though she is in the midst of acting out a particular character. In the first narrative, both Maturin and her sister are pictured in what appear to be costumes; Maturin is wearing white, slightly translucent fabric, and is shown with a floral crown and veil. Her eyes wear a dreamy, faraway

A Night to Remember.

By Mrs. FRED MATURIN, NÉE MISS EDITH MONEY.

Being a personal narrative of the awful plight into which two high-spirited and mischievous English girls got themselves in one of the wildest parts of India. Lost in the jungle; the jungle on fire; and a terrible man-eating tiger known to be abroad.

"THE book," said papa, "that you girls talk of—"

"It's not bush at all," said I, eating hot chappatis outside the manager's bungalow one lovely morning in December some years ago, before I married.

I remember this little conversation so distinctly, because of all that it led to.

My father, Colonel Money, had just brought me and my sister Leila out to India, the land of our dreams! All through the dreary years of education and deportment in our grandmother's dignified home in a quiet part of England we had talked, and planned, and dreamt of the day when our father would fetch us and take us back to India. While grandmamma, an aunt, and our governess conversed to us of meek, accomplishments, and eternity, we pondered on hair-breadth escapes, perilous adventures, and the conquest of male hearts by the score, when the day should come to spread our wings towards the East.

In the French convent that followed, we kept the nuns entranced with tales of all we had already gone through, and the valour displayed during our extreme infancy out in India; and we so horrified them, that seventeen special masses were put up for our preservation when we finally quitted the peaceful cloister for the rolling deep over which we were to be borne to

that land in which, according to us, life was not worth an hour's purchase.

Well, and here we were: landed safely in the Great Doorn—in those days, and even now, one of the most "tigerish" districts in all India. We had been here five weeks, daily longing to see a tiger or some other murderous animal, but so far hadn't caught a glimpse of even the tip of a speckled tail!

Papa had come out to India to look after his tea-gardens, and was very busy walking or riding about all day from one to the other, with his manager, dilating on "greenly," "cricket," and "spiky"; while Leila and I—who considered both him and the manager miserably slow—galloped on horseback about the dense jungles that surrounded the tea estate, seeking in vain the savage creatures we longed to encounter.

In the cool of the evenings we entertained the young bachelor planters, who rode into Poooharry from all points of the compass to see the Colonel's daughters; for no fresh female white face had been seen there for years, and the conquests we had dreamt of now took place thick and fast.

We also beguiled the time writing letters home to the convent, describing combats with man-eaters and tussles with lion-constrictors, which we knew would send a thrill through all, from the fat little reverend mother down to the rosy-faced lay-sister who presided over the cloister kitchen,

and who would shudder and pray, as she stirred her eggs, that our innocent young lives might be spared a little longer.

Meanwhile, we complained daily to our father of the pitiful scarcity of man-eaters and poisonous reptiles in his jungles, and, in return, he would reply drily that he was sorry for our disappointment, but hoped luck might still come in our path; and, when it did come, that our valour would not ooze quite away, but that we should prove ourselves the heroines we evidently imagined we were.

Oh, of course, you don't believe it, papa," said I, nestled at the wink he bestowed upon the manager, who stood by on this particular December morning, putting a huge plantain leaf into the crown of his mushroom-topper, for he had a long, hot ride before him. The manager smiled—to him we were just a pair of silly children—but I continued—

"All I can say is, if I came upon a tiger in the jungle—as we might any day—I should get off my pony, and stand and stare him out of countenance—wouldn't you, Leila? I shouldn't even feel *tempted* to run away!"

"Very praiseworthy," said papa. "Well," he went on, "I didn't mean to tell you, fearing to make you nervous, but your chance may be near, at last."

"A man-eater," said the manager, gravely, "is reported to be devastating the native villages round about Money's Hope and farther on. The villagers came in a body this morning before you were up, young ladies, to ask the Colonel to get up a shoot; so you can see the fun from the howdah!"

"Howdah, indeed!" said I, indignantly; "my own pony, and nothing else, please!"

Whereupon papa gave it as his opinion that we were talking "hush."

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER.

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relate a really true story of extreme personal peril for the first time in our existence.

The tiger-shoot would take us day or two to get up, and, meanwhile, we were burning to get a glimpse of the doomed monster.

"We'll have our ponies round," said we, "and be off for a long ride at once. Any message for Money's Hope, papa?"

"There'll be no danger, Colonel," said the manager, reassuringly, "if they take care to be back before sundown."

"I forbid you," said papa, severely, "to be in the jungle after sunset. You hear girls?"

Leila was about to protest at this inhuman order, when I nudged her under the table, and we both chimed meekly, "Very well, papa," then sighed, and completely took him in. So much so, that he added, apologetically—

"I never like to check your fun, but in this instance I must be obeyed. Come to me before you start. I shall have a letter for Jones" (the manager of Money's Hope, one of papa's gardens).

Our ponies came round and we mounted, our hearts beating high.

Papa came out to see we hadn't left off our solar-toppers, which we considered very unbecoming, and were always trying to avoid wearing.

"We had no side-saddles; and papa—who always objected to unnecessary expense—had refused to get us any, so, being passionately fond of the exercise, and quite fearless, we had learnt to ride with ease sideways on men's saddles, the right foot in the off-stirrup turned over.



MRS. FRED MATURIN. From a Photo.



COLONEL MONEY, NEAR WHOSE TEA PLANTATION THE INCIDENT OCCURRED. From a Photo.



MISS LEILA MONEY. From a Photo, by J. B. Crofton, Calcutta, Calcutta.

Figure 27. Page image from *Wide World Magazine* 3/14 (May 1899): 158–9.

look, and her left arm is raised as though caught in the midst of a dance, and in this way the photograph resembles a Julia Margaret Cameron photograph or a Pre-Raphaelite painting. The image's placement on the page suggests Maturin's role as a fragile heroine in need of protection. On the first page of the account, in what the visual rhetoric of the magazine generally presents as the position of the heroic narrator, the editors have placed a photograph of Maturin's father, Colonel Money. It is only on the next page that the editors have placed images of Maturin and her younger sister, thus visually suggesting the father's position as protector of the two girls (Figure 27).

This combination of vulnerability and eagerness for adventure comes together most fully in the illustrations accompanying the stories. Each of the drawings is done by Paul Hardy, a prolific late-Victorian illustrator whose pictures are seen throughout the *Wide World*. The pictures depict Maturin very much in the Gibson Girl tradition (Figure 28) and emphasize her beauty, but they also show her as an active, assertive, even aggressive figure, such as when she urges her pony away from the jungle fire in the first account (Figure 29). In the image, she leans forward against her pony's neck with whip aloft. She does not look back at the fire, nor does she show terror, and her body language indicates a self-possessed determination to escape. Most strikingly, in the picture illustrating the midnight attack (shown at the beginning of this essay), she sits up in bed, wide awake and leaning forward, aiming the toy gun toward the shadowy figure that can be seen through the door. Again, she shows no fear, but rather



“WE STOOD A CANDLE IN A PILGRIM-BOTTLE AT THE WINDOW.”

Figure 28. Paul Hardy, “We stood a candle in a pilgrim-bottle in the window.” Illustration from *The Wide World Magazine* 3/15 (June 1899): 328.

determinedly takes aim at the intruder. In this way, text and image present two visions of Maturin: both as a romantic heroine and as a strong New Woman adventurer.

Although, as stated above, there is no evidence that Maturin had any editorial control over the illustrations accompanying her text, the dual image presented by the paratextual materials extends the narrative that Maturin tells about herself as an adventurous New Woman, while also presenting her as a potentially vulnerable heroine. As I have argued, this split is part of a print economy in which her imperial New Womanhood depends upon the existence of a threat. According to Margaret Beetham and Ann Heilmann, being attentive to the nuances of such splits is key to understanding the New Woman in the international context, as well as “the processes by which the new gendered identities emerging at the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century brought together elements of the traditional and the radically



“WE URGED OUR TERRIFIED PONIES DOWN THAT NARROW PATH.

Figure 29. Paul Hardy, “We urged our terrified ponies down that narrow path.” Illustration from *Wide World Magazine* 3/14 (May 1899): 161.

new” (3). In the narratives themselves, Maturin uses India as a threatening backdrop to throw her courageous New Womanhood into relief in a way that is analogous to Rosemary Marangoly George’s observation that the colonial space allowed white British women to achieve a form of power, but only in relation (or in comparison to) the native Other. George asserts that “[i]f the Englishwoman recognizes herself and is recognized as national subject only outside the national boundaries, then she becomes ‘of the master race’ only in the presence of ‘the native’ who will hail her as ‘memsahib’ (literally, ‘Madame boss’)” (107). We see this in action in Maturin’s narratives, such as when she takes direct retaliation on a native servant to vent her frustration after spending a frightening night locked in a room with a cheetah: “I . . . seized and threw wet mud at two or three servants, who . . . were gathering here and there. Having plastered the astonished kitmudgar’s face I felt much better” (“The Candle” 330). Maturin “felt much better” after venting her emotions and, by implication, because she has asserted that she can use her subordinates as targets for her anger. Likewise, India provides a backdrop for Maturin to demonstrate a level of adventurousness and bravery unavailable to her back home in England.

The dependence of Maturin's *New Womanhood* on the backdrop of colonial India becomes most visible in the third installment, which recounts her adventures as the wife of a British soldier in an Indian hill station and includes the midnight attack episode with which this essay opens. This episode shows Maturin's embeddedness in discourses of gender and empire, and it is worth unpacking its multiple layers to draw out the ways in which her account is marketed through textual and paratextual layers of gendered colonialism. In this story, Maturin draws on a host of Orientalizing motifs in order to underscore her position as a brave adventurer, beginning with a description of a group of bored ladies in Dalhousie, a British hill station in the Punjab region, rehearsing some in-house theatricals "in aid of charity" ("Our Chamba" 358). The main sequence in the theatricals involves a Turkish dance number, in which the ladies perform a scene in a harem, with a doctor playing the role of "a jolly little *Pasha*, and performed his part so well that three infuriated husbands in the audience insisted on coming behind in the ten minutes' interval to ask him what he meant by holding their wives so tight that they screamed" ("Our Chamba" 359). This play-acting of stereotypes of eastern sexual decadence frames the second half of the story, which revolves around violence, both threatened and actual, and native attempts at revenge for mistreatment by the British.

In the second half of the story, the tone shifts from frivolity to danger when Maturin, her children, and her servants are left behind in the remote hill station long after the season has ended. At this time of year, there is "no food unless you seized it from the natives by force" (360). Facing the possibility of running out of food, this is exactly what Maturin directs her servant to do, and the household is provided with a sheep in the following manner: "we had sent my *khansamah* twenty miles into Chamba to fetch [the sheep]. He obtained it by giving its owner a clout over the head, and then making off as hard as his legs would carry him, first throwing the price of it down at the infuriated native's feet; or he said he did" (360). This act of violent appropriation sparks a series of attacks and counter-attacks in which Maturin ultimately emerges as the victorious British heroine. The gender and racial politics at work here are inextricably connected to the politics of British occupation in this region in the late nineteenth century. Chamba (now part of present-day Himachal Pradesh), where the action takes place, was a princely state, meaning that it was not formally part of Britain's colonial empire, but ostensibly autonomous. The state, which had supported the British in the mutiny, was ruled by a Rajah who proved his loyalty to the British crown through an annual monetary tribute, originally set at 12,000 rupees, but, through Indian land concessions, had been reduced to 3,800 rupees by 1904 (*Punjab States Gazetteer* 109). While the Rajah was ostensibly in control, a British administrator acted as Superintendent to "assist" in governance. In Maturin's story, the Rajah is friendly to the British, but this is clearly not the case for the local tribes, whose loyalties were more uneven. Although Maturin never reveals which tribe the owner of the sheep belongs to, it is clear that the act of appropriating property from a native for the use of a British household symbolizes not just a violation of property, but an assault on native autonomy.

In revenge, the men of the tribe attack the hill station, but they are scared off, taking the sheep and leaving a shoe behind. The next day, at the Rajah's suggestion, Maturin uses the shoe left behind by the attacker to "try" a group of suspects. As we are told, "The ceremony did actually take place with much solemnity," and Maturin sits "on a kind of throne as judge" ("Our Chamba" 363). In this scene, Maturin uses the event as an opportunity to parody the justice system and to reverse the usual gender dynamics by taking on the role of

judge, which was “assumed half for fun and half to inspire awe” (363). This role-playing “appeared to excite great anger amongst them, for it is well known that they despise our sex” (363). The implications of this playful re-enacting of a courtroom scene, with a white British woman sitting on a “throne as judge,” are clearest within the context of the controversy over the Ilbert Bill (1883–84), which proposed allowing native judges to try Anglo-Indians. This bill was overwhelmingly opposed by Anglo-Indians, resulting in what came to be known as a “white mutiny.” As Mrinalini Sinha has pointed out, opposition to the bill had significant gender implications, both because the image of a white woman made vulnerable before a native judge was a powerful symbol for rallying opposition and because of the significant opposition by white women themselves (99). Among the vocal opponents of the Ilbert Bill were Anglo-Indian tea planters, who, according to Jenny Sharpe, objected to it out of fear that they would be held responsible for acts of cruelty against native workers (*Allegories* 89). Maturin’s father, Edward Money, was one of the members of the Anglo-Indian Association for Obtaining the Withdrawal of the Indian Criminal Procedure Act Amendment Bill, so Maturin was likely aware of the arguments against the Bill, as well as the implications of a gendered re-working of the court.⁶ In Maturin’s version, the power dynamic has been completely reversed with a white British woman sitting in judgment of male Indians.

Likewise, the assertion that it is “well known that they despise our sex” points to a nexus of arguments about the treatment of women in India that were used both in favor of empire and of women’s emancipation. As Antoinette Burton points out, “rhetoric about Indian women’s condition, which was equated with helplessness and backwardness, was no less crucial to notions of British cultural superiority and to rationales for the British imperial presence in India than the alleged effeminacy of the stereotypical ‘Oriental’ male” (7). According to Catherine Hall, “the figure of the Indian woman” became an “index of Indian society’s desperate need for help” in colonial discourse (52). The image of the degraded Indian woman, central to the discourse of colonial responsibility, became an equally powerful argument for the emancipation of British women. Without full political rights, feminists argued, British women were hampered in their ability to help Indian women. In Burton’s words, British feminists deployed images of Indian women as “helpless victims awaiting the representation of their plight and the redress of their condition at the hands of their sisters in the metropole” (7). Thus, the allusion to Indian male hatred for the female sex in Maturin’s narrative resonates beyond the immediate moment of anger toward Maturin, and would furthermore suggest the Indian male’s attitude toward women in general as both the cause of Indian women’s degradation and the argument for maintaining the imperial power relations that Maturin exploits in this scene. Indeed, Maturin also makes a gendered argument for female emancipation by showing the necessity of British womanhood to police Indian male violence and misogyny. The feminized image of justice that she presents is thus shorthand for feminist and imperialist arguments in favor of British superiority.

The rage unleashed by Maturin’s playacting of justice leads to a second midnight attack. As described in the opening paragraph of this essay, the attacker lurks outside her bedroom late at night. Describing her terror at seeing the intruder, Maturin assumes that the intrusion is connected to the theft of the sheep: “I should not, perhaps, have been *so* terrified but for his remarkable height and odiously fiendish expression. I felt certain, and do now, that it was our Chamba Cinderella!” (364). In describing this moment, and her response to it, Maturin draws on the trope of an Indian male attacking a white British woman to emphasize her

bravery and level-headedness in a crisis. Rather than becoming a victim, or cringing in fear until she is rescued, Maturin responds by firing at her attacker with a toy gun and running after him in pursuit. In this way, the attempted attack becomes an opportunity to highlight her character as an adventurous New Woman. Likewise, Maturin's reference to the toy pistol fits into gendered discourses from the period. Not only is she clear-headed enough to use a toy gun to scare off her attacker, but he is naïve enough to be fooled by a child's toy. Maturin explains her ability to fool the attacker in racialized terms: "no European could possibly have been thus taken in; but a native, easily" (364). Similarly, the reference to him as her "Chamba Cinderella" fits into discourses of Orientalism by feminizing the Indian native and putting her in the position of the assertive – even masculine – pursuer.

While it is not clear exactly what the intruder had planned, Sharpe might argue that this scene of an armed native attacking a British woman in her bedroom would likely have conjured up images of attempted rape for British readers. In Sharpe's analysis, the accounts of rape that dominated the British press after the siege of Lucknow continued to play out in literary images that were part of a "colonial discourse on the native assault of English women in India" ("Unspeakable" 216). Sharpe's analysis of how unsubstantiated accounts of rape "produce[d] value for colonialism" during the 1857 rebellion provides a useful framework for understanding Maturin's deployment of the colonial attack narrative to bolster her own credentials as a New Woman (*Allegories* 4). Through these accounts, Sharpe asserts, British officials invoked "the knightly virtues of honor, a veneration of women, and protection of the weak . . . so that the army *as an institution* could act as a punishing avenger" and suppress the threat to colonial authority (*Allegories* 76). Although rape is never mentioned in Maturin's narratives, the appearance of a threatening male outside her bedroom in the middle of the night suggests the intent on a physical, if not sexual, attack, and these attacks play a central role in Maturin's narrative by illustrating her fearlessness and daring.

As a feminist critic, I feel slightly uncomfortable asserting that the attack on Maturin, which may or may not have been an attempted rape, presents an opportunity for her. Nevertheless, the repeated staging of physical, and at times sexual, threat against the female body in the pages of the *Wide World* is central to the ways in which female writers demonstrated their credentials both as authors and as adventurers. These are not just stories of beautiful landscapes; the exotic or colonial landscape is always described as presenting an element of threat. As these narratives show, within the space of the *Wide World*, the existence of the threatening Other was essential to crafting an identity as imperial New Woman adventurer. Likewise, looking at the *Wide World* through the lens of gender and empire reveals the imperatives of the publishing industry in the late nineteenth century, as well as the ways in which women writers could use those imperatives to carve out professional careers as authors. The image of Maturin bravely fighting off an attack was the key motif in this story, as is suggested by a column in the July 12, 1899 *Derby Mercury* that excerpts only the moment of the attack and Maturin's recourse to the toy pistol ("Saved by a Toy Pistol" 6). As this reprinting shows, the image of the resourceful woman fending off a native male attacker was the crucial selling point of the narrative. Likewise, in Maturin's 1913 account of a trek in South Africa, *Adventures beyond the Zambesi*, her traveling companion attempts to relieve her anxiety about a near escape from a lion by reminding her "what splendid copy it is for your book" (136). Maturin's work, and the crafting of her identity as an imperial New Woman heroine, capitalizes on an economy of peril in which her ability to navigate

the dangers of the colonial environment through gendered and racialized acts of conquest becomes a marketable commodity.

University of Michigan

NOTES

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1. The critical conversation on British women's complicity in imperialism is a rich one. See in particular Levine, George, and Procida.
2. See Sinnema (4), Brake and Demoor (8), and Codell (410).
3. See Arata (107–32).
4. Both Clune and Maslen assert that the magazine's circulation rose as a result of De Rougement's narrative, although neither one cites circulation figures. See Maslen, pages 111, 118, and 122. Although circulation figures for the magazine are elusive, Maslen's detailed reconstruction of the attention that other periodicals, especially the *Daily Chronicle*, devoted to debating whether or not De Rougement's story was true suggests that the magazine enjoyed widespread interest and readership during this period.
5. For more detailed information on the Money family, see Green, especially chapters 3 and 4.
6. See "List of Members of the Anglo-Indian Association" in *The Ilbert Bill: A Collection of Letters, Speeches, Memorials, Articles, &c., Stating the Objections to the Bill* (159).

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