

MRS. SEACOLE PRESCRIBES HYBRIDITY: CONSTITUTIONAL AND MATERNAL RHETORIC IN *WONDERFUL ADVENTURES OF MRS. SEACOLE IN MANY LANDS*

By Jessica Howell

IN AN 1857 *SATURDAY REVIEW* ARTICLE of the novel *Two Years Ago*, T. C. Sanders characterizes Charles Kingsley's ideal man: he "fears God and can walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours – [he] breathes God's free air on God's rich earth, and at the same time can hit a woodcock, doctor a horse, and twist a poker around his fingers" (qtd. in Haley 108). Tom Thurnall, the fearless, constitutionally robust, well-traveled doctor and hero of *Two Years Ago*, fits these requirements. His physical strength also manifests itself as a charmed immunity to illness: during a cholera epidemic in Aberalva (a fictional Cornish town), "[Tom] thought nothing about death and danger at all . . . Sleep he got when he could, and food as often as he could; into the sea he leapt, morning and night, and came out fresher each time" (Kingsley, *Years* 288). Charles Kingsley's own self-proclaimed medical and religious philosophies give clear insight into *Two Years Ago's* intended effects. A sanitary reformer in the mould of Edwin Chadwick and Florence Nightingale, Kingsley felt that disease arose from crowding, filth, and poisonous vapors.¹ Kingsley's contemporaries named his perspective "muscular Christianity," recognizing that Kingsley "strong arms" his readers by inspiring in them fear and uncertainty about their own health practices and then shows them the way, with examples like Tom, to an active, devout lifestyle.

For the majority of Aberalva's fictional inhabitants not blessed with Tom's iron constitution, disease is a particularly terrifying foe, omnipresent but invisible: "All men moved about the streets slowly, fearfully; conscious of some awful unseen presence . . . some dreadful inevitable spell, which lay upon them like a nightmare weight; [they] walked to and fro warily, looking anxiously into each other's faces, not to ask 'How are you?' but 'How am I?' 'Do I look as if –?'" (284). Disease is retributive in Kingsley's schema, punishing those who choose to live in close, cramped quarters and who refuse the vigorous physical activity God intended. The men's terror in this excerpt stems not just from disease's invisibility, but also from the sense that they could be already carrying disease with them unawares. They must ask an acquaintance to "read" their own death sentence imprinted on their features. Thus, the vulnerability felt in the face of disease is compounded by dependence on one's

neighbor. Both reliance and gratitude are even more acute when said neighbor has some medical training or ability. The inhabitants of Abergvalva express pathetic regret that they did not listen to Tom's exhortations to space themselves out and become more active before the cholera arrived. They now turn to him with frantic appeals, hoping he can save them from their fate.

Kingsley's "muscular" Christianity, however appealing it may have been to some English subjects, was not uncontested in its bid to define the ideal British subject. The *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* by Jamaican Creole nurse and hotelier Mary Seacole, also published in 1857, presents an alternate vision. Mary Seacole's status within British society could not have been more different from Charles Kingsley's. What might be the intended effect of passages heavy with similar doubt and fear-inspiring medical rhetoric in a book by a mid-Victorian woman of mixed race? During this time when British soldiers and colonialists were suffering strikingly high death tolls abroad, both Charles Kingsley and Mary Seacole use medical rhetoric to inspire doubt in their readers regarding whites' biological superiority. However, Charles Kingsley's stories are set within the boundaries of Britain, and he believes that the weakening of the Anglo British constitution can be reversed through exercise and better sanitation. In contrast, Seacole uses constitutional rhetoric to stress British subjects' fundamental biological incompatibility with tropical climates and to valorize the racially mixed subject who can survive different disease environments. She is content to leave her readers disoriented, their concerns unresolved. While Tom Thurnall provides a model of good health to which most white Britons can aspire, Seacole's model – namely, herself – is unattainable in its profound otherness.²

At the same time, Seacole needed very specific things from her audience. Bankruptcy urged her to write a book which would convince her readership that she deserved financial support for her past public service. Though other Victorian travel narratives, such as Richard Burton's *Wanderings in West Africa* (1863) and Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897), arguably also have strong rhetorical goals, neither is so personal or so pointed in its petitions. *Adventures* – a travel memoir with inserted letters of commendation – primarily seeks to document Seacole's good deeds. Further, she seeks donations for her service in Panama and at the Crimean warfront by emphasizing the personal and caring nature of that service. To this end, she makes public her own internal emotions of love, frustration, excitement, and pride in a way most other Victorian travel writers do not.

Seacole's book has been admired by critics of her own time as well as of ours for its straight-forward, sincere tone. Readers are encouraged to experience it as strikingly honest. Recent analyses of *Adventures* have begun to acknowledge, however, that a sincere tone can often be considered rather than spontaneous, and that Seacole's "confessional strategy," indeed "entices readers to accept [her] assertions at face value" (Fluhr 107). Seacole may have chosen to make her narrative persona transparent in order to enhance the book's primary function: garnering money. We can think of the text as a kind of retrospective résumé – Seacole wishes to be paid now for a job she performed in the past. A mysterious and opaque résumé would be ineffective. Thus, I choose to interpret Seacole's strategies of self-portrayal as intentional and powerful, not a plea for racialized acceptance.

Throughout this essay, I attempt to follow Seacole's own example: I emphasize her unique, mixed heritage instead of placing her within one dominant racial category. Nevertheless, one must examine the possible influences which her status as colonial subject had on both the content and form of her work. In her recent article "Their Calling Me

“Mother” Was Not, I think, Altogether Unmeaning’: Mary Seacole’s Maternal Personae” (2006), Nicole Fluhr argues that Seacole may share with black woman autobiographers a heightened awareness of writing to be “read by those who might influence the course of public events, might pay money for their books, or might authenticate them as authors” (referring to Elizabeth Fox-Genovese³). As Fluhr states, “these writers needed to pay special attention to gauging and responding to readers’ expectations” (107). But how would this description differ from that of many other travel writers, many of whom hope to influence public policy and some of whom depend on their readership for support?⁴ As a subject of mixed-race, Seacole is an unfamiliar entity to some of her readers. Perhaps in anticipating this she creates an autobiographical persona that is more transparent than many other Victorian travel writers. Further, she particularly emphasizes that the white subjects in her books feel familiar and comfortable with her. Though these strategies may lull her readership into benevolence, this essay is most concerned with the ways in which Seacole’s identity as racial Other inspires her to assert her superiority. Namely, she implies that her own mixed-race body is superior in its disease resistance to those of the men she nurses.

By emphasizing her own superior constitution, I suggest that Seacole does not align herself with her white readership but rather claims their respect and acceptance on her own terms. Frantz Fanon, in his classic *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), argues that “Ontology does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For . . . he must be black in relation to the white man . . . [and] the white world, the only honorable one, bar[s] [him] from participation” (109, 114). Many contemporary critics and biographers hitherto have tended to read Seacole in the Fanonian tradition.⁵ They believe rejection from British society dampens Seacole’s spirit – at the extreme, they call her a “good colonial”; at the least, they seem to agree she wishes to “fit in” with white British culture. In *Maps of Englishness* (1996), Simon Gikandi argues, “[Seacole] assumes that it is only within the dominant codes of Victorian England that she can inscribe herself as a subject” (131). I think it is important here to distinguish between the “dominant code” of racist hierarchies and the “dominant code” of national pride. Seacole may indeed feel a loyalty towards Britain as nation that she does not feel towards Britons as race. It is important not to read Seacole’s memoir as motivated by the same “shame and self-contempt” Fanon believes people of color develop when confronted with their own otherness (116). Rather than inscribing herself within the “dominant codes” of British society, Seacole manipulates elements of several discourses to script an alternative identity. She maintains the integrity of the disparate strains of her ancestry, rather than subsuming one into another to gain entry into a dominant group.⁶

Instead of manipulating scientific discourse in order to demonize natives and allay her readers’ worries as to their biological supremacy, as might a “good colonial,” Seacole chooses to reinforce those worries and establish herself, Mrs. Seacole, as the embodied cure for British ills. As Sandra Gunning states in her article “Traveling with Her Mother’s Tastes: The Negotiation of Gender, Race, and Location in *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*” (2001), Seacole “negotiates the politics of white crisis very deliberately, making use of the ideological fissures that inevitably come into being to achieve her own economic and social success” (953). This essay focuses on Seacole’s exploitation of the fissures within the ideology of white constitutional superiority, provided by Britons’ experience with tropical disease. She presents herself as the ideal mixed-race subject, whose strong constitution allows her to travel between disease environments, curing colonizers of what ails them. One might argue that this only proves she ingratiates herself by inspiring guilt

and fear in her readers rather than pity. On the contrary, by examining the interrelated and overlapping mid-Victorian discourses of racial hybridity and constitutional medicine, I want to argue that Seacole cannily borrows, subverts, and appropriates rhetorical elements from each to suit her own goals. She proves her legitimacy as a hybrid Briton, while undermining scientifically-justified racism, and by implication, Imperial ideology.

I. Race and Hybridity

SEACOLE OPENS HER BOOK BY presenting her own pedigree. She was born to a Creole mother and a Scottish father in Kingston, Jamaica in 1805. Though she invokes her father's background first, perhaps in order to establish a common ground with her reader, equal emphasis is placed on both her positive Scottish and Creole inheritances: "I am a Creole, and have good Scotch blood coursing in my veins . . . My father was a soldier, of an old Scotch family . . . my mother . . . was, like very many of the Creole women, an admirable doctress" (1–2). The label "Creole" in itself does not necessarily connote that Seacole is of African descent, as during her time the word could indicate a person of either "European or African Negro race" who was "born or naturalized in the West Indies" (www.oed.com). However, both the book's original cover illustration and Seacole's repeated references within the text to her skin color demonstrate that she is frank about her black heritage.

Seacole surely had encountered racial prejudice in Jamaica, where mixed-race individuals were ranked into hierarchies based on the relative darkness or lightness of their skin, where slavery was alive until 1834, and where her mother catered to the needs of guests who displayed varying degrees of respectfulness. As stated by Jane Robinson in her biography of Mary Seacole, Jamaican "not-quite-negroes" were "graded – like sugar or coffee – into different castes with an elaborate taxonomy. The coarsest was the sambo, born of a mulatto and a black. A mulatto had one white and one black parent; a quadroon one mulatto and one white . . ." (6). However, this taxonomy may have arisen partly to articulate the differences between the subjects of mixed-race because there were so many of them in Jamaica. Fluhr states that "interracial liaisons were commonplace" in the West Indies; Gunning explains that miscegenation was "widely practiced and openly sanctioned" (108, 957). It was not uncommon for a European soldier to take a native mistress, later establishing her as the head of a hotel or boardinghouse in order to give her and her children financial and social security. Part of Seacole's later self-confidence and pride may have stemmed from this early life: she grew up in an environment where, though whites might attempt to impose stratifications and guidelines of racial purity, there abounded subjects of mixed race and mixed heritage, many of whom were in positions of social power.

In telling contrast with Joseph Conrad, Mary Kingsley, and other Victorian travel authors who map the imagined, unknown regions of Africa before venturing there themselves, Seacole grew up tracing with her finger the route to Britain. She naïvely believed Britain to be another home to her, as it was her "fatherland" twice over – the point of origin of her father, and also Jamaica's colonial parent: "I was never weary of tracing upon an old map the route to England; and never followed with my gaze the stately ships homeward bound without longing to be in them, and see the blue hills of Jamaica fade in the distance" (4).⁷ Still, she found that mixed-race subjects such as herself were not nearly as common or accepted in England as in the Jamaican colonial context. She was rudely disabused of any notions she may have had of acceptance by white English society when she first visited in

1821: “some of the most vivid of my recollections are the efforts of the London street-boys to poke fun at my and my companion’s complexion” (4). Such treatment would discourage and perhaps cow many people, but Mary Seacole regards this episode less as a racial abjection than a miscomprehension of her value as vigorous hybrid subject.

Before analyzing specific examples of Seacole’s self-valorization in her book, I should briefly outline circulating definitions of the term “hybrid,” in order to establish the discourse into which she implicitly enters. Published in 1857, Seacole’s book emerged at a time rife with debate about race and racial mixing. Though the furor regarding hybridity in books, magazines, journals, and professional societies reached a high pitch in 1864, the rumblings of active discussion had been taking place since the 1840s. As outlined by the editors of the three-volume history *Race, Hybridity and Miscegenation* (Bernasconi and Dotson), James Prichard (*The Natural History of Man*, 1855) was the “leading race theorist” up through the 1840s. He had theretofore “largely won the day” with his arguments for monogenism.⁸ However, American scientist J. C. Nott began a flood of articles and tracts against monogenism in the late 40s and 50s, which “transformed the way racial mixing was seen” (vii; bk. 1). His most famous book, *Types of Mankind* (1854), was a best seller.

At the center of the dispute was the issue of species distinction: were different races descended from one “parent” species, or were they discrete? The term “hybridity” played a crucial part in this debate because distinct species had historically not been thought capable of productive interbreeding (in other words, black and white mates should not yield viable offspring, and the offspring should not themselves be fertile). Nott suggested that the age-old “fertility” test was not accurate (Bernasconi and Dotson 1: 9). He held that mixed-race human subjects are indeed “hybrid” – according to his definition, the progeny of two distinct species – whose fertility does not cease at once but decreases through subsequent generations. By his definition, then, “mulattoes,” or the descendents of one black and one white parent, are less fertile and biologically weaker than “purebreds” of either race. In his 1846 article attempting to disprove the “Unity of the Human Race,” Nott uses Jamaican mulattoes as an example: he says the progeny of white and African interbreeding is of “faulty stock,” and the “shortest-lived of any class of human” (Bernasconi and Dotson 1: 52). Against Nott there arose a small but vocal contingent of theorists who argued that mixed-race individuals were in fact “hardier,” and that everyone would benefit by eventual racial mixture. The term “miscegenation” was coined by a tract of that title, which propounded the preceding argument and sparked the 1864 debates.⁹

An anonymous review of “Miscegenation” was published in the May 1864 issue of *Anthropological Review*. The author of this review disagrees vehemently with the reviewed text’s assertion that “The intermarriage of divers races is indispensable to a progressive humanity,” stating with overwhelming precision that “This is totally false, and . . . rests on no scientific data, and is contradicted by many well-known facts” (117).¹⁰ F. W. Farrar published “On Hybridity” in the 1864 edition of the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London*. His claim echoes Nott’s perspectives: “Mixture of types in *most* cases, if not all, leads to an ‘abrutissement’ and degradation. Mulattoes, as is well known to practical physicians, have a special tendency to consumption and other diseases” (ccxxv).¹¹

These excerpts from Victorian scientific discourse on race and disease demonstrate two things: first, that Seacole tapped in to a very germane and contentious topic and second, that the scientific community was far from decided regarding the “hardiness” of mixed-race subjects, and had mostly only anecdotal data with which to argue either side. Thus,

for Seacole to imply that her own personal experience had demonstrated white “purebred” constitutions were inferior to her own was a canny, subversive rhetorical move. Because we have limited sources apart from *Wonderful Adventures* pertaining to Seacole’s life, it is difficult to prove that she had read or heard of Nott’s theories. However, by portraying herself as physically “hardier” than “purebred” subjects, she directly, if not explicitly, contradicts the strain of thought propounded by Nott and his followers, who contended that mixed-race subjects were biologically inferior. Further, she rejects the historical definition of a “hybrid” as being the product of two species, implying repeatedly throughout her book that mixed-race subjects are not only natural but in fact fitter to survive myriad environments.

We tend to associate such a celebration of mixed-race subjectivity with our new, more contemporary definition of hybridity. Perhaps we assume, with Robert Young, that the “old” definitions were oppressive and polygenic.¹² We may then conclude, as he does, that to use the term invariably raises specters of scientifically-justified racial separatism. In this essay, however, I suggest that the concept of “hybridity” was not merely under the purview of bigots. I use “hybrid” as a name appropriate to Seacole’s mixed-race status, which she repeatedly figures as positive. I do not mean to minimize the racial prejudice of the 1800s, but rather to posit that key terms and concepts were in flux and under continual formation.

However, if we acknowledge that there did in fact exist in the nineteenth century many forms of institutionalized racism, how did this one Creole authoress muster the confidence to make such subversive rhetorical moves? First, as I have already implied and as I will attempt to demonstrate later in this essay by analyzing her book’s reception history, Seacole’s British readership was amenable to her unique perspective and insights. Second, Seacole’s background and upbringing may have imbued her with a good deal of self-assurance. She had been raised to be skilled and independent. She was able to heal where others had failed, travel world-wide and retain her health, and bounce back from myriad crises with apparently undiminished strength. She was discouraged from foreign service by men and women physically weaker, less capable or less experienced than she, who claimed for themselves superior status they did not earn but were rather born with. However, instead of becoming a colonial apologist whose main goal was to ingratiate herself with these same men and women, Seacole instead might have learned the skill fictional character Tom Thurnall mastered in his travels:

He had watched human nature under every disguise, from the pomp of the ambassador, to the war paint of the savage, and formed his own clear, hard, practical estimate thereof. He did not wish to live on men, but live by them he must; and for that purpose he must study them, and especially their weaknesses . . . It was hard work; but necessary for a man who stood alone and self-poised in the middle of the universe. (Kingsley, *Years* 35)

In spite of the obvious dissimilarities between Thurnall and Seacole, it is a similar image of Seacole I suggest holding in mind when examining her text – strong, sure of her own abilities, and able to inspire in others those emotions that best serve her ends. Although Seacole’s rhetorical choices in the *Wonderful Adventures* necessarily reflect her liminal status as a female of color, just as importantly, they reflect her powerful personality and undeniable physical resilience.

II. “Live by them [s]he must”: Seacole’s Audience

WONDERFUL ADVENTURES OF Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands does document the heroine’s travels in the “many lands” of Panama, Jamaica, and the Crimea. However, her adventures in each of these locales center on offering comfort and medical aide to those who are suffering. Her patients are mostly young men who serve the British Empire abroad. Through her efforts, Seacole makes many grateful friends amongst these men and their anxious families back in England. When the end of the Crimean War leaves her destitute and she needs financial aid, it is therefore natural that she write a book pitched towards two main audiences: military men and their doting mothers. In order to discuss how Seacole perceived and rhetorically constructed her own mixed-race identity, one must remain aware of her two-part intended audience. Like Charles Kingsley, Seacole “strong arms” her readers by inspiring in them both fear of disease and gratitude towards the one protecting them from it. However, whereas Kingsley paints the “muscular Christian’s” superior health as stemming from faith and healthful habits, Seacole implies that her racial hybridity is the source of her superior disease resistance.

Though Mary Seacole is alone, traveling among strangers in strange lands for much of her life, there is an eight-year interlude in this independent existence during which she marries and establishes a household with Edwin Horatio Hamilton Seacole, a white British merchant about whom very little is known. Seacole’s narration of her marriage is as de-sexualized as her later nursing narrations. It sets the tone for how Seacole relates to the men of empire she encounters. Mr. Seacole’s distinguishing characteristics within Seacole’s account are timidity, tractability, and ill health. She uses active, dominating verbs when describing him: “I married him . . . I took him down to Black River . . . I undertook the charge of him . . . I kept him alive as long as I could.” The only actions attributed to Mr. Seacole during their marriage are proposing, becoming ill, and dying: “at last *he grew* so ill . . . Within a month of our arrival [back at my mother’s house in Kingston] *he died*. This was *my* first great trouble” (5–6, my emphasis).

Though there are people Seacole encounters on her travels with whom she does not see eye to eye, such as Lola Montes; rude, young British children; and American men, they are introduced in the *Wonderful Adventures* to be dispensed with, serving as examples for her supposedly more enlightened readers of inappropriate behavior (41, 4, 48). Seacole consistently exercises medical authority and maternal power over the white British men she encounters abroad. As Mr. Seacole was, so too are these men vulnerable and dependent on Seacole’s abilities. She is willing and able to minister to them. Though we can not be sure Mr. Seacole felt similarly blessed, in the British male patients whose stories she narrates Seacole inspires nearly unilateral acceptance, gratitude, and loyalty. Throughout the text Seacole positions herself as surrogate mother to these blue-eyed, blond, young, white, male subjects, whom she idealizes and infantilizes. A clear example can be found in her narration of the death of a surgeon who fell ill in Jamaica. She describes him, in health, as “busy, light-hearted, and joyous as a good man should be.” When he fell ill, she says, “they brought him to my house, where I nursed him, and grew fond of him – almost as fond as the poor lady his mother in England far away . . . I think he had some fondness for me . . . for I used to call him ‘My son – my dear child.’” As the young man is dying, he asks Seacole “let me lay my head upon your breast . . . I miss my mother.” After he dies, Seacole says she wears “a little gold brooch with his hair in it” (61–63). While lending comfort to this dying young

man, Seacole also appropriates for herself the role of his mother, complete with the physical intimacies associated with mother-child relationships. Though she leaves no doubt she is a stand-in for “the poor lady his mother” whom he misses so much, Seacole still claims for herself the rights of a mother to witness her child’s life stages, just as she claims the right to carry a piece of the young man’s body with her after he dies.

In order not to alienate the second faction of her audience, likely to have included British mothers, Seacole explains that these attentions were approved of in retrospect by the man’s real mother, who sent Seacole the brooch after his death and thereby validated her as “stand-in.” These statements simultaneously portray Seacole as indispensable to and enmeshed with British society while distinguishing her from the position of a social leech, or charity case, often associated with subjects of mixed-race. However, she leaves no room for doubt that the Anglo British mothers she substitutes could not survive where their sons need them. As Sandra Gunning observes, “the sickly English pale in comparison to Seacole and her ability to survive physical challenges the world over, whether she resides in Jamaica, Panama, the Crimea, or England” (962). As hybrid nurse and hotelier, then, Mary Seacole recreates “home” wherever she goes. She thereby somewhat subverts the “Angel in the House” ideal, implying that a white woman locked by disease vulnerability into her own home cannot truly mother the sons of an Imperial nation. Only Seacole, who carries “home” to wherever it is needed, can truly provide for her “sons.”¹³

When she serves in the Crimea, Seacole continues to mother as well as nurse boyish young men. These characterizations echo earlier ones in terms of diction (“a man’s spirit,” “like a fond mother”) and nostalgic tone: “There was one poor boy in the Artillery, with blue eyes and light golden hair, whom I nursed through a long and weary sickness, borne with all a man’s spirit, and whom I grew to love like a fond old-fashioned mother” (153). It is not just individual men she comes to love, but all those who pass through her care: “I used to think it was like having a large family of children ill with fever” (152). With this phrase, Seacole links tropes of motherhood and nursing to claim for herself space at the center rather than the margins of British society. By mothering the youth of England, Seacole repaints the figure of Mother England into a stout woman of color. As implied by the name of her Crimean business, the British Hotel, Seacole does not merely attempt to replicate certain characteristics of Britain in order to give the soldiers “a taste of home.” Seacole does not copy Britain, she *is* Britain: she playacts Queen Victoria on the warfront, and later presents herself as a representative English woman: “very much delighted seemed the Russians to see an English woman. I wonder if they thought they all had my complexion” (188). Seacole demonstrates her ability to inhabit the image of British subject, remaking it to look like her. Thus, Seacole’s narrative anticipates a project that will be taken up by postcolonial racial Others for years to come: to prove that marginalized subjects are not in fact marginal but central, racial mixing is a *fait accompli*, and the only thing left is for former colonizers to realize this.

My repeated invocation of mothering may inspire a question: how can Seacole mother white boys without invoking cultural worries of miscegenation? As Robert Young argues in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (1995), the Victorian imagination often conflated hybridity with miscegenation. After all, Seacole herself exists only through the procreation of a white man and a woman of color. This is not a fact likely to be missed by her white audience. William Daverell Cattell, an assistant surgeon in the British army, called Seacole “an elderly mulatto from Jamaica” (qtd. in Fluhr 104). As previously stated,

a mulatto is by definition the cross between one black and one white partner. In her own mind, Seacole might be “Creole,” “yellow,” or even “Jamaican.” To whites, she is mulatto. Seacole side-steps the explosive issue of miscegenation by carefully portraying herself as a de-sexualized, maternal figure. As Cheryl Fish states, “she becomes a . . . nonsexual ‘aunty’ in Panama and ‘mother’ at the Crimean war front” (68). Seacole wishes to assure her readers that she does not recommend the creation of an army of new hybrid subjects, so much as the embrasure of those already in existence. Further, she evades linking herself with any white man, or any man at all, while she is traveling in the capacity of healer and businesswoman, but rather skips over sex straight to mothering.

Seacole deemphasizes her own sexuality by explaining her choice to stay unmarried – “it was from a confidence in my own powers, and not at all from necessity, that I remained an unprotected female” – while making it clear that she is not attracted to white men (8). During a farewell speech in her honor, an American man in Cruces says that he wishes he could “bleach” Seacole to make her white (and, by implication, thereby be able to court or marry her and bring her into white society). He is soundly rebuffed: “as to his offer of bleaching me, I should, even if it were practicable, decline it without any thanks. As to the [American] society which the process might gain me admission into . . . judging from the specimens I have met here and elsewhere, I don’t think I shall lose much by being excluded from it” (48).

III. “[S]he must study them, and especially their weaknesses”: *Mid-Century Worries*

ONE OF THE HUMAN MOTHER’S definitive traits is her indispensability.¹⁴ Mary Seacole is indispensable, she argues, because her uniquely hardy constitution makes her exceptionally well-suited for the job of nursing British subjects abroad. If whites are determined to colonize foreign lands, exposing themselves to hostile, foreign climates, Seacole implies that they will need surrogate mothers of mixed-race who can survive different disease environments to nurse them back to health. Though her mothering functions to sustain the project of colonialism, it does not follow that Seacole supports or condones the colonial impulse. Rather, her primary goal is to insure for herself a vocation comprised of the elements she most values: personal freedom, entrepreneurship, adventure, and exploration.

It was particularly easy to activate white British subjects’ fear of disease in the middle of the nineteenth century. Britain of the 1850s was still reeling from the “massive waves of contagious disease” of the thirties and forties: two influenza epidemics and the first cholera epidemic occurred between 1831 and 1833; 1836 to 1842 saw “major epidemics of influenza, typhus, smallpox and scarlet fever”; and 1846 to 1849 “felt the reverberations of typhus, typhoid and cholera epidemics” (Haley 6). 1857 came after the adoption of the smallpox vaccine (discovered in 1796 and made mandatory in various countries up through mid-century), but before the general acceptance of germ theory (developed primarily in the 1870s): the “causes and patterns of disease” were then still “very much matters of speculation” (11). Undermined by the reported high death tolls abroad in certain tropical colonies, confidence levels about subjects as diverse as medical treatment options and the “future of the race” were by no means high. As historian Simon Schama explains, “The omnipresence of death seemed disproportionately chastening to a generation breezy with not entirely undeserved confidence that they had done more than any of their predecessors to master their physical environment . . . In [the] tantalizingly slight gap between knowledge and mastery, mortality entered to mock the Victorian sense of control over life” (223).

Such profound concerns are reflected in fictional texts of the time, as demonstrated by the excerpts from *Two Years Ago*. The experience of Tom Thurnall – an infinitely brave and indefinitely rechargeable healthy male English subject, impervious to harm from the lack of life’s basic necessities – contrasted with how many individuals fared under nineteenth-century disease outbreaks and their aftermaths. Charles Kingsley’s British readership would have been painfully aware that young men cannot always rejuvenate themselves with bracing dips in the sea, having foregone food, water, and dry clothes. If Tom Thurnall represented one author’s wishful imagining of perfect European disease resistance, Mary Seacole was ready to correct this idealization with a strong dose of bleak reality.

One may speculate that her readers’ awareness of their own race’s disease vulnerability would have been reinforced by reports of the Crimean war, in which poor distribution of medical supplies and governmental mismanagement caused soldier mortality from illness and malnutrition to peak. Death from disease and malnutrition is now conservatively estimated as three times that from battle (Keller 19). The Crimean war lasted from 1853 through 1856. It arose from disputes over the control of Christian holy places, the Danubian Principalities, and Mediterranean trade routes. The two sides – Russia versus the allied forces of France, Sardinia, Britain, and Turkey – fought mostly on the Crimean peninsula in the Black Sea, but also in the regions of western Turkey, the Baltic Sea, and the Pacific Ocean (Royle, Prologue and ch. 1). For the British, the Crimean war was militarily inconclusive and unsatisfying. Britain had its own organizational and tactical failures to blame for the lack of decisive victory. Supplies and medicine desperately needed by British troops were lost at sea before they reached their intended beneficiaries, or left to rot at the port, with no one assigned to distribute them; bad preparation and health practices left troops vulnerable to cholera epidemics and exposure in winter; and military mismanagement led to debacles such as the Charge of the Light Brigade, in which six hundred soldiers were given orders to advance unprotected through the valley between the Fedyukhin Heights and the Causeway Heights, with more than half falling to enemy fire. All these blunders have given the Crimean war the reputation of “one of history’s bad jokes” (Royle ix).

This military “draw” had a profound psychological impact on those who directly experienced the war and also on those who observed it from home. Florence Nightingale fought first-hand against such failures of organization when serving at the military hospital of Scutari in the Crimean War. In March 1855, at the same time Mary Seacole was arriving at the front and trying to set up her “British Hotel,” Ms. Nightingale wrote despairingly in a letter addressed to Baron Sidney Herbert “A great deal has been said of our ‘self-sacrifice,’ ‘heroism,’ so forth. The real humiliation, the real hardship of this place . . . is that we have to do with men who are neither gentlemen, nor men of education, nor men of feeling, whose only object is to keep themselves out of blame, who will neither make use of others, nor can be made use of” (Nightingale 107). As someone who observed the war’s mismanagement from home, the Duke of Wellington supports these views in his pamphlet “Some Observations on the War in the Crimea” (Wellesley 1855). He states, “From ignorance, and want of attention to a proper arrangement, the medical department has been defective in every point, notwithstanding the unwearied and meritorious exertions of the medical officers in the field, in the hospitals, and on board of crowded, unprovided and infectious transports” (6). For a powerful representative of government to whom the people looked for guidance to claim that a significant portion of his army’s forces had been inept, or “defective in every point,” shows how seriously Britain viewed its Crimean failures.

Seacole was able to activate a deeper concern which was circulating during the time of the Crimean war: that British militaristic failures might indicate a weakening of the British constitution. The Oxford English Dictionary gives “constitution” a two part definition: “a. physical nature or character of the body in regard to healthiness, strength, vitality, etc.” and “b. nature, character, or condition of mind; mind, disposition, temperament, temper” (www.oed.com). These meanings have been in common use since the sixteenth century and were certainly current during the Victorian era. “Constitution” as a concept is nevertheless slippery: much of one’s constitutional makeup was thought to be determined by heredity (as in the sense of coming from “good stock”), but environmental factors such as climate and lifestyle factors such as physical activity and diet were also thought to play a part in heredity (to what extent was not clear; the theory of evolution was yet to be popularized by Darwin’s 1859 *Origin of Species*). In other words, the line between adaptive and innate traits was even less defined than it is today. The two parts of a constitution – mental and physical strength – also bled together, as previously suggested by the analysis of Charles Kingsley’s text: one’s perspective and “moral fibre” was thought to influence one’s susceptibility to disease. Recurrent illness also eroded one’s bravery and mental stability, thus leaving one (and by extension, one’s descendants) further open to illness.

Kingsley expounds more explicitly on his worries regarding the fate of his nation and race in his *Sanitary and Social Essays*, which were not published until 1880 but are clearly relevant to these mid-century fears: “We talk of our hardy forefathers; and rightly. But they were . . . of the strongest constitutions . . . a hard, valiant, and enterprising race” (Kingsley 22). English hardiness has declined, he argues, because industrialization and technological breakthroughs have allowed weaklings to survive, and because the majority of people have lost their appreciation of exercise and manual labor. Thus, constitutional strength is measured in terms of “hardiness” – resistance to disease, “valiance” or bravery, upward mobility – and “hardness,” perhaps of emotion and will.

Kingsley spoke in the tradition of eighteenth-century physicians like Thomas Beddoes and Thomas Trotter, who condemned the growing effects of modern comfort on the English character: the English malady was a “disease of civilization,” they said, “resulting from the consumption of too many luxuries.” This disease of civilization resulted in British subjects’ “susceptibility to hysteria and a host of related nervous conditions, variously called hypochondria, spleen, vapours, lowness of spirits, melancholia, bile, excess sensibility, or, simply, nerves” (Logan 1). Though these nervous ailments had been heretofore idealized maladies of the aristocracy, the increase in wealth and luxury made possible by industrialism caused theorists such as Kingsley, Carlyle and Spenser to worry that the middle class was also becoming afflicted.

If the white British race was suffering increased sensitivity, brought on by a lack of physical vigor and a slowly decreasing constitutional resistance to disease, this also caused medical theorists to be worried about the viability of colonial expansion. The second edition of Sir James Ranald Martin’s *The Influence of Tropical Climates on European Constitutions*, published in 1856, states that the most important predisposing causes of yellow fever are “Adult age, the male sex, constitutional peculiarities, mental emotions” (588). There is little in that list under an individual’s control, except perhaps “mental emotions.” Those of Martin’s readers most likely to be traveling to foreign lands and coming in contact with yellow fever – namely, young or middle aged white men – could only hope they were free from “constitutional peculiarities” and able to avoid the emotional extremes thought to leave one open to disease.

Therefore, Mary Seacole, who primarily nurses ailing white soldiers and Imperialists, has open to her the possibility that “savage” blood may give her a physically hardier constitution than “purebred” whites. Further, armed with the belief that “fear is [disease’s] powerful auxiliary,” she, as bedside companion, has every opportunity to form her own opinions about whether her patients’ display of fear indicates that her own constitution is also emotionally hardier (Seacole 26). Seacole does not hesitate to display to her readers her conclusions on both these subjects: conclusions which clearly display what she perceives as her own constitutional superiority.

IV. *Constitutionalism in Wonderful Adventures*

IN REGARDS TO HER “physical nature or character,” Seacole has scientific precedent to think her disease resistance superior to that of whites; specifically, the constitutional disease rubric acknowledges that members of a race which “evolved” in a certain climatic environment may have innate resistance to the diseases found in that environment.¹⁵ During the 1850s, when she was traveling and writing, this possibility still met with much resistance in the scientific community. By 1871, when he published *The Descent of Man*, Darwin and his contemporaries began to acknowledge blacks’ enhanced resistance to specific diseases:

That negroes, and even mulattoes, are almost completely exempt from the yellow-fever . . . has long been known. They likewise escape to a long extent the fatal intermittent fevers that prevail along at least 2600 miles of the shores of Africa . . . this immunity in the negro seems to be partly inherent, depending on some unknown peculiarity of the constitution, and partly the result of acclimatization. (Darwin 238, 243)

As well as calling into question the strength of her patients’ physical constitutions, Seacole uses her memoir as a venue through which to assess their “nature, character, or condition of mind.” Drawing upon her extensive experience observing sickbed and deathbed scenes, Mary Seacole reaches the following conclusion: “Death is always terrible – no one need be ashamed to fear it. How we bear it depends much upon our constitutions.” Feeling fear in the face of one’s imminent mortality is natural: how one copes with that fear is determined by the relative strength or weakness of one’s constitution. She reads these reactions, in turn, as indicating the subject’s moral fibre. Seacole continues, “I have seen some brave men, who have smiled at the cruellest [sic] amputation, die trembling like children; while others, whose lives have been spent in avoidance of the least danger or trouble, have drawn their last painful breath like heroes” (61). In other words, no matter what his socially prescribed role, each man’s natural, underlying constitutional tendency asserts itself in times of extreme stress, such as the end of his life. In both cases, Seacole is not only comforter but attentive audience and experienced evaluator of the men’s last moments. Though she does not specify whether she was one of many or few people present at their deaths, her description claims for herself the authority of witness, not just observer. Seacole measures both men in the foregoing comparison by their bravery in the face of pain. More importantly, she proves to her readers that she wields the power to publicly evaluate men’s deaths in writing. She may depend on her readers for financial support, but they depend on her to protect their loved ones’ reputations.

Though she clearly mourns her patients' passing, Seacole's sadness never compromises her own health. In fact, while attending hundreds of sickbeds through the course of her lifetime, she only once mentions becoming seriously ill herself: that instance, in which she suffers briefly from cholera during a Panamanian outbreak, she attributes to exhaustion brought on by a surfeit of nursing others. One is meant to infer from her continued good health that Seacole has a strong emotional constitution: she never succumbs to habitual or paralyzing fear of disease, which was thought to bring on disease itself.¹⁶ She describes herself as emotionally resilient, feeling deeply and then recovering quickly, which she attributes to her Creole heritage: "I do not think that we hot-blooded Creoles sorrow less for showing it impetuously; but I do think that the sharp edge of our grief wears down sooner than those who preserve an outward demeanor of calmness, and nurse their woe secretly in their hearts" (6). Critics who read Seacole as driven to assimilate to white culture think this passage's "line in the sand" function anomalous. Instead, I suggest that for Seacole to distinguish her own emotional (simultaneously racialized) constitution from that of her readers is quite consistent with her underlying goal: to prove herself different through her enhanced resistance to disease.

To prove that her hybrid constitution makes her stronger than "purebreds" of either race, Seacole must demonstrate her physical as well as emotional hardiness in contrast to those she encounters. In order to achieve what I infer is her goal – showing that mixed-race subjects are indispensable members of society – Seacole not only portrays herself as healthy, hardy, and willing to work, but she also navigates fraught rhetorical waters in order to present both "purebred" whites and "purebred" natives of the lands she visits as constitutionally inferior to her. In other words, she conveys that she has something more than either whites or natives – not just in terms of her unique cultural heritage and skills, but in terms of her innate disease resistance.

Thus, Seacole is even-handed in her constitutional condemnations of non-hybrid subjects. Though she is inclined to believe Creole Jamaicans, her "people," constitutionally resistant to yellow fever, she is not so flattering towards the native Panamanians, with whom she shares no racial identity. During the outbreak in Panama, Seacole is quick to distinguish herself from natives who are more often afflicted with the disease. She says, "the Cruces people bowed down before the plague in slavish despair . . . the natives, constitutionally cowardly, made not the feeblest show of resistance" (26). She characterizes both whites and natives of foreign countries as weak – "slavish," in fact – thereby implying that the hybrid is the only subject with a constitution sturdy enough to brave myriad disease environments. Thus, because of their hardiness, individuals such as herself should be embraced by their colonizing parent country as ideally suited to the "messy" work of traveling abroad.

Seacole reinforces a common colonial concept of disease when she represents the natives who die from cholera as "constitutionally cowardly"; however, she thereby also reflects the unavoidable conflicts brought into play by this colonialist sentiment: if death rates from disease epidemics reflect cultural inferiority, what is the explanation for white British subjects dying in droves? She therefore cannot invoke constitutional weakness without implicating all races that have been decimated by cholera, including the British. Like a hardy weed, however, she is quick to point out that she, a "yellow," mixed-breed woman, is the one left standing: "I think their chief reliance was on 'the yellow woman from Jamaica with the cholera medicine'" (27). In the moment Seacole manipulates circulating discourses of race and science to argue for her own independence and value, she inevitably enters and changes

the current racial discourses. What is especially remarkable is that she deftly inserts herself at the center of British society instead of at its margins without causing her Victorian readers to balk at having been painted as emotionally and physically delicate in the process.

Given Seacole's implication of English constitutional weakness, her remark that "the yellow fever never made a more determined effort to exterminate the English in Jamaica than it did in that dreadful year" is quite telling (59). It not only personifies disease, but attributes intention to the disease, namely the extermination of English subjects. By pin-pointing the English as particular victims, by using the word "exterminate," which writes the English as pests, and by thus saying the disease "cleaned up" the colonies, Seacole accomplishes two goals: she reinforces English colonizers' anxiety regarding the effects of the colonial project on their health and well-being, while also presenting herself as the diligent force combating disease on their behalf.

These passages (pages 59–60) are some of the most overtly skeptical regarding the viability of British imperialism in the *Wonderful Adventures*, and Seacole gives force to her critique almost exclusively through medically informed rhetoric. She uses constitutionalism in spite of the fact that she clearly suspects some diseases to be contagious rather than spontaneously generative, as demonstrated by her comments during the yellow fever outbreak on Jamaica: "Our idea – perhaps unfounded – was that a steamer from New Orleans was the means of introducing it into the island" (*Wonderful Adventures* 9).¹⁷ This seems to indicate that she wishes to draw her readers' attention, not to steamers from America, but to their own incompatibility with the foreign climates.

The complications Seacole introduces by using a constitutional disease rubric in the aforementioned Panamanian sections are here made explicit, most likely because of the identification she feels with Jamaica. "It was a terrible thing," she says, "to see [white] young people in the youth and bloom of life suddenly stricken down, not in battle with an enemy that threatened their country, but in vain contest with a climate that refused to adopt them" (60). The word "vain" here serves a critical function, by implying that the British case in Jamaica is a hopeless one, biologically speaking, as the local climate will always wreak havoc with their health. Climate was one of those environmental factors thought to play a part in the development of specialized racial constitutions. Thus, by saying the Jamaican climate "refused" to adopt whites, Seacole is employing the rhetoric of environmental determinism to imply that they will never become acclimatized to her native land. Their constitutions are not suited for it. This paragraph's concluding sentence reinforces her critique: "Indeed, the mother country pays a dear price for the possession of her colonies." This statement seems to be underpinned by questions left unspoken, such as "For what purpose? To what end?"

V. "Self-poised in the middle of the universe": Mrs. Seacole's Reception

AS HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED, in the *Wonderful Adventures* Seacole pointedly calls into question both the physical and emotional superiority of the white British constitution. One might reasonably expect, then, given the established debates regarding hybridity, some objections following the memoir's publication – some hue and cry over whether her book was moral, proper or even accurate. Even if not perspicacious enough to pinpoint the specific implications of Seacole's references to racialized constitutions and her appropriation of medical authority, one might expect prejudiced readers to take issue with her confident and self-aggrandizing tone.

Perhaps surprisingly, people who seem to have held negative biases against Seacole reacted more to her personality than her race, and complained about her actions rather than her book. Florence Nightingale’s interactions with Seacole epitomized such a bias: she thwarted Seacole’s desire to serve as nurse in the Crimea, motivated by what seemed to be her overarching philosophy that people should keep to their “places” in society. When asked by her brother-in-law whether she thought he should accept Seacole’s petition to nurse the wounded in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, Ms. Nightingale’s reply is unequivocally negative: “She kept – I will not call it a ‘bad house’ but something not very unlike it – in the Crimean War . . . I had the greatest difficulty in repelling Mrs. Seacole’s advances, & in preventing association between her & my nurses (absolutely out of the question)” (qtd. in Robinson 191). This prejudice seems to be personally more than racially motivated. It could not have passed unnoticed that Seacole’s warm, dry British Hotel, a “recovery station” on the front, afforded soldiers a much better chance of healing than Nightingale’s “deathtrap hospital at Scutari” (Schama 221).

Those who had no personal quibble with Mary Seacole, however, were unilaterally complimentary. Far from exhibiting a racial prejudice borne of bitterness and fear, the men she had treated in Jamaica and the Crimea spread her reputation as an excellent nurse and a well-intentioned, kind woman. Their regard is demonstrated by the many excerpted letters of praise Seacole proudly includes in *Wonderful Adventures*. After her bankruptcy, those same men organized a lavish benefit in her honor at the Royal Surrey Gardens.¹⁸ It spanned three days and was attended by several thousand people. Seacole’s memoir came out a month before the party and was very well received. It “sold out within eight months”; another issue was published in March of 1858 (Robinson 174).

The 6 December 1856 poem, “A Stir for Seacole,” published in *Punch Magazine*, is a testament to her popularity and mainstream appeal. It portrays Seacole as a wartime heroine and encourages its readers to give her their monetary support. Perhaps it does not present Seacole in entirely her preferred terms: she is repeatedly referred to as “a kindly old soul” during a time of her life which she herself identifies as “late summer” rather than old age; she is described as having a “berry brown face,” when she more often labels her color throughout the *Wonderful Adventures* as “yellow”; emphasis is placed on her role as hotelier and seller of goods before her nursing, when she identifies her true calling to be that of “doctress,” like her mother.¹⁹ The piece is, however, unquestionably admiring in its treatment of Seacole. During a war when the British armed forces were popularly thought to have been paralyzed by decorum and red tape, *Punch* stresses that “Dame Seacole’s” service transcended prejudice:

No store she set by the epaulette,
Be it worsted or gold-lace;
For K.C.B or plain private SMITH
She still had one pleasant face. (221)

One wonders how the same mid-Victorian society that validated the racial values of men like Nott, of the opinion that mulattoes are unnatural and biologically weak, could demonstrate such respect for “Dame Seacole.” It would seem that her vision – a world of ailing white colonialists nursed by surrogate, mixed-race mothers – would appear to such men a terrible fate for white Britain. After all, she is the product of the “highest” race mating

with the “lowest,” she wanders the world interacting with representatives of that “highest” race on nearly equal terms, and to top it off she calls into question the basic tenets of biological superiority that the “highest” race holds dear.²⁰

One may find a clue to this seeming contradiction in the 25 July 1857 review of *Wonderful Adventures* published in the *Athenaeum Journal*. The author of this review lends his approbation to Seacole’s book, calling it “unpretending and affecting” (937). Like the *Punch* poem commending her ability to see beyond class and rank, the author of the *Athenaeum* review privileges Seacole’s ability to avoid the rules of decorous narration that might obscure the truth. During a war characterized by some historians as rife with spectacle and nationalistic rhetoric, Seacole may have used her otherness as permission to speak frankly and represent reality as she experienced it, a practice for which she found respect.²¹

Nineteenth-century historian Alexander Kinglake suggested that “it is with field-glasses, not prying microscopes, that people must watch a campaign” (7: 334). Though in her first encounter with the Crimean war Seacole’s reports conform to this suggestion – “It was very pretty to see [the troops] advance, and to watch how every now and then little clouds of white smoke puffed up from behind bushes and the crests of hills, and were answered by similar puffs” – she soon “descends” and documents military skirmishes not from promontory outlooks above the field of battle but from amidst the dying and fighting men (148). When Seacole is not on the battlefield, she records the impermanence of life and the agonizing pain suffered by those she tends at the British Hotel. There is no one better placed, she suggests, to witness the “truths” of the Crimea. Seacole’s self-valorization, post-Crimean popularity, and general acceptance suggest that the status of Victorian mixed-race subjects was more complex than has been previously thought.

By examining the complex strains of rhetoric upon which Seacole draws, one discovers constitutionalism’s potential to subvert, not just reinforce, scientific colonial racism. Seacole deftly activates her readers’ fears regarding their racial, biological, and national superiority, positioning herself as indispensable to their ongoing survival. As Seacole’s main goal is self-glorification, she does not hesitate to leave her readers’ concerns unresolved. Her profession is to nurse and provide comfort – perhaps their ongoing insecurity is to her benefit.

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NOTES

1. Chadwick’s *1843 Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* was the seminal text here.
2. Though acknowledged as an important figure during her time, Seacole was forgotten by historical accounts of the Crimea until the late twentieth century. “The fact that her efforts were overlooked in later accounts of the war constitutes not only history’s judgment of her role but, implicitly, a gloss on the position of its chosen heroine, Florence Nightingale” (Dereli 186). Seacole’s popularity is currently in an upswing: a newly discovered portrait of her hangs in the British National Portrait Gallery, there is an exhibit dedicated to her in the Florence Nightingale Museum, and she is now presented as a historical figure of importance in the National Curriculum for British primary schools.
3. “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, a noted historian and women’s studies scholar [and the Eléonore Raoul professor of the humanities at Emory University] . . . roiled both disciplines with her transition from Marxist-inclined feminist to conservative public intellectual” (Fox).

4. Richard Burton and Mary Kingsley are two possible examples.
5. See recent studies on Seacole, including Robinson (*Mary Seacole: The Charismatic Black Nurse who Became a Heroine of the Crimea*, 2005), Killingray (“Mrs. Seacole’s Wonderful Adventures in Many Lands and the Consciousness of Transit” in *Black Victorians/Black Victoriana*, 2003), and Innes (*A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain, 1700–2000*, 2002).
6. Unfortunately, contemporary readings of her work have tended to re-polarize her identity, labeling her as primarily a “black woman writer,” a proto-feminist, or a colonial apologist. Current race criticism is still grappling with how to theorize the multivalent rhetoric of hybridity – what one contemporary critic calls “the problematic of multiracial pride” (Danzy Senna, “Passing and the Problematic of Multiracial Pride” in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*, ed. Harry Justin Elam and Kennell A. Jackson, 83, 2005). Seacole’s narrative, one of the first written by a free subject of mixed-race, engages precisely this problematic by exploiting scientific discourse to prove her own unique abilities and strengths.
7. For a contrast, see Marlow’s speech in *Heart of Darkness*: “Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting . . . I would put my finger on it and say: When I grow up I will go there” (Conrad 11).
8. The theory that all races of humankind descend from a common ancestor; polygenists, conversely, believe that the races arose in different locations, from difference species.
9. The tract eventually proved to be a hoax, written by theorists overstating their case in order to goad the opposite party into argument. Though an exaggeration, *Miscegenation* expressed a legitimate perspective within scientific discourse of the time.
10. Review is of the pamphlet *Miscegenation, or the Theory of the Blending of Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro*, published by Trubner, 1864.
11. For a more complete background on the Victorian discourse of hybridity, see theorists such as Paul Broca (*On the Phenomena of Hybridity in the Genus Homo*, 1864) or Louis Agassiz (“Essay on Classification,” 1862). Foreshadowing of these theories can also be found in the earlier literature of “natural history” and “anthropology,” such as Nott’s *Types of Mankind* (1854) and Prichard’s *Natural History of Man* (1843).
12. I will analyze Young’s *Colonial Desire* (1995) in more depth later in the essay.
13. Seacole’s use of maternalism forms an interesting contrast with other female explorers such as Mary Kingsley. Kingsley clearly states that she can go abroad and risk death only because she has no children or husband to look out for, thus extricating herself from ideals of British Victorian mothering. In contrast, Seacole posits herself as more capable of mothering young British men abroad than their delicate Anglo mothers, who must stay home. Both simultaneously free themselves from the domestic sphere while trapping other women within it.
14. “Adventurers” or “travelers” often justify their own importance to their home country, arguing that the knowledge they gather and the insights they provide are indispensable. Seacole’s key role is two-fold: not only does she transmit crucial knowledge about the situations she encounters, but she also keeps alive the Nation’s representatives.
15. I use this term knowingly before its time as the best way to indicate long-term development of a race.
16. For further discussion of the somatization of disease, see Athena Vrettos’ *Somatic Fictions* (1995).
17. Yellow fever is in fact transmitted via mosquitoes.
18. As it turns out, the Royal Surrey Gardens Company could ill afford the luxury, as it was deeply in debt to begin with: after having paid its creditors at the rate of five shillings on the pound, the Company was able to only give Seacole fifty-seven pounds (Robinson 177).
19. I see an ironic parallel between how Victorian discourse simplified and re-labeled Seacole and how our contemporary treatment of her has accomplished much the same effect (continuing to call her the “black Nightingale,” for example, a nickname first given her by the soldiers she served in the Crimea).

20. This acceptance continued late into Seacole's life: Prince Viktor, Queen Victoria's nephew, sculpted a bust of Seacole out of thanks for her care. Princess Alexandra of Wales, the Queen's niece, seems to have been friendly with Seacole – there is some evidence Seacole served as her masseuse (Robinson 193).
21. See art historian Keller's *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War* (2001). He argues the Crimean war was the first "media war" in history: battles were "staged" choreographically, recorded through various media, and then "staged" in the realm of public discourse in order to enhance nationalist ideals of heroism.

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