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## NEW WOMAN, NEW WORLD: MATERNAL FEMINISM AND THE NEW IMPERIALISM IN THE WHITE SETTLER COLONIES

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**Synopsis** — The New Woman, the figure of feminist rebellion who emerged in 1880s and 1890s in English fiction and social commentary, became the focus of a good deal of anxious polemic. In the context of the massive wave of expansionism during these years of the Second British Empire, the New Woman—and feminism, as it appeared to undermine woman's reproductive "duty"—came to be seen as a sign of *imperial* decline. It was in response to this view that suffragism undertook to transform the New Woman into the feminist image of the woman as "mother of the race." In the white settler colonies, this image held a particular iconic value, since both the imperial mother and the "virgin" territories of the New World were configured as the last hope for the Empire. This article traces the analogy of New Woman and New World, and discusses how Anglo-colonial fictions of woman suffrage re-presented the question of white women's role in the progress of nation and Empire. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

The New Woman, the figure of feminist rebellion who emerged in the 1880s and 1890s in English fiction and social commentary, bore the brunt of a good deal of animosity. As Ann Ardis points out in her recent study of the New Woman novel,

A tremendous amount of polemic was wielded against her for choosing not to pursue the conventional bourgeois woman's career of marriage and motherhood. Indeed, for her transgressions against the sex, gender, and class distinctions of Victorian England, she was accused of instigating the second fall of man. (Ardis, 1990, p. 1)

Ardis's suggestion that the New Woman was seen to herald a modern fall is particularly compelling when we consider the cultural context within which the New Woman was constituted, for "she" appeared with the massive wave of expansionism upon which the Second

British Empire rode in the final decades of the 19th century. The New Woman began to appear in literature at exactly the same time that British immigrationist propaganda was busily re-presenting the freshly opened portions of the two biggest white settler colonies, Canada and Australia, as the "New World."

Although what was called the New World had been imagined for some four centuries prior to the 20th, the image was revived and reconfigured for the purposes of pro-British expansionist propaganda in the 19th century. Immigrationist prose of the period promoted these colonial territories as the Empire's final frontiers; in the case of the newest provinces in western Canada, as "The Last Best West," or, more pointedly, "The White Man's Last Opportunity" (Seton, 1908, pp. 525–532). Annette Kolodny (1975) has shown, through her analysis of colonial representations of the United States, that the idea of the New World *as* new always required that it be a "virgin" land, an *empty* and unspoiled body, bearing, as Doug Owsram (1980) has suggested of the Canadian west during the expansionist years, "the promise of Eden." The New World has always served as a site for the potential real-

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ization of a fantasy of pastoral recovery for the Old. The late Victorian version of this fantasy differed from earlier Old World visions of the New only in being couched within the period's imperialist discourses of race regeneration, social purity, and imperial renewal—what Bernard Semmel has called “imperial social reform” (Semmel, 1960), and what is often identified as the “New Imperialism.”

It is because the New Woman and this New World both, simultaneously, took shape within the expansionist discourses of the New Imperialism in the last two decades of the 19th century that Ardis's (1990) comment is so significant. To configure the New Woman as a harbinger of “the second fall of man” in the context of the construction of the New World as the Empire's new Eden is to invoke what was by the 1880s a familiar rhetoric of imperial degeneration seen to be caused by women. Since, as Lynda Nead (1988) has observed, “[t]he moral condition of the nation . . . was believed to derive from the moral standards of women” (p. 92), when women “fell,” they would take the nation with them. The fallen woman thus carried the possibility of the moral collapse of the nation, and, in consequence, of the Empire that made up the “Greater Britain.” “It is surely significant,” Nead observes, “that the language of moral and dynastic degeneration is the same: decline and fall; the terms plot both a moral and an imperial narrative and a fall from virtue can symbolize the end of an empire” (Nead, 1988, p. 94). Although Nead is talking primarily about the prostitute as “fallen” woman, this paradigm for plotting decline through women can also be used to define the “problem” of the New Woman, who likewise, by her sexual “transgressions,” appeared to threaten the stability of the Empire. What Ardis (1990) foregrounds when she links the New Woman to late Victorian rhetoric of the fall is the pervasive imperialist ideology of gender, which insisted that insubordinate “woman” would, once again, bear the blame for social ruin. Only this time, she would take the British Empire with her, and in consequence would bring down what was seen to be the apex of civilization, a Darwinian culmination of humanity's natural selection, and what was touted as the most righteous, benign, and moral empire ever to dominate so much earthly territory.

When feminism was defined only in relation to the New Woman, as it so often was, it appeared to be anti-imperial. Although it would be oversimplifying the case to position the New Woman as the epitome of *fin de siècle* feminism, it is clear that she did serve as a focus for antifeminist sentiment precisely because, like the prostitute, she appeared to endanger the strength and security of the Anglo-Saxon race. The condition of “the race” was becoming an article of considerable anxiety for Britons throughout the Empire. The birthrate recorded amongst Anglo-Saxons, Anna Davin (1978) notes, had dropped significantly in every census since 1881 (p. 10). Seeming epidemics of tuberculosis and venereal disease, and the related “racial poison” of alcohol, formed an index of imperial decline. By the end of the century, moreover, the concerns raised by the failure of so many young British recruits to meet the standards necessary for enlistment in the armed forces, and the subsequent loss of the Boer War in 1902, fostered a climate of intense alarm throughout the Empire. Not only was “the race” apparently weakening, it was threatening to die out altogether. As Davin points out, feminism—or, to be exact, New Womanhood—exacerbated these fears of racial degeneration, since it appeared to represent a widespread desire on the part of women to forgo childbearing for careers and independence, and the New Woman seemed set to rend the social fabric from end to end by abdicating her household cares and entering the workforce (Davin, 1978, pp. 20–21).

Such a view is implicit in the arguments of one virulent antisuffragist, Sir Almroth Wright, who maintained in his polemical work, *The Unexpurgated Case Against Woman Suffrage* (Wright, 1913), that the stability of the Empire could only be ensured through the proper ordering of the domestic microcosm. Implicit in Wright's configuration is the model that John Ruskin had articulated in the 1865 lecture “Of Queens' Gardens.” “Now the man's work for his own home,” Ruskin asserted, “is . . . to secure its maintenance, progress, and defence; the woman's is to secure its order, comfort, and loveliness.” He continued:

Expand both these functions. The man's duty, as a member of the commonwealth, is to assist in the maintenance, in the advance, in the defence of the state. The woman's

duty, as a member of the commonwealth, is to assist in the ordering, in the comforting, and in the beautiful adornment of the state. (Ruskin, 1900, p. 130)

Ruskin followed this summary of gendered duties in “the state” by admonishing women that “. . . [what] is true of the lower or household dominion is equally true of the queenly dominion [and] that highest dignity is open to [them], if [they] will also accept that highest duty” (Ruskin, 1900 p. 134).

Ruskin may not have anticipated in 1865 that he would be implicated in establishing the foundations not only of antifeminist rhetoric like Wright’s, but of *feminist* rhetoric too. When the question of the condition of “the race” became so pressing, and when feminism needed a positive image to counter negative views of the New Woman, it was to the earlier Victorian notion of woman in the commonwealth, galvanized by imperial and domestic “duty,” that imperialists—feminist and anti-feminist—all turned. Feminism and imperialism, that is, *both* emerged from the growing concern about the possible collapse of “the race” and the British Empire. In the context of popular fears of degeneration, suffrage feminism had little choice but to oppose anti-New Woman rhetoric with another “new” woman-centered discourse of liberation, one that demonstrated a faith in the Empire at least as stalwart as the official view, and that endorsed a similar concept of womanhood. Feminist writers thus devoted considerable energy to assuring male readers of their own *imperialist* interest in the expansion of England and the righteousness of the civilizing mission, as well as of their own interest in the preservation of the race.

Such a gesture should not be regarded as mere opportunism on the part of feminists: Anglo-Saxon suffrage feminists were certainly as motivated by imperial concerns as were their antisuffrage opponents. Indeed, suffrage feminism in the British Empire was, for the most part, a profoundly imperialist movement, committed to the idea of “the race,” and galvanized by anxieties about degeneration and imperial decline. Feminists’ handicap lay not in their own opposition to the politics of empire, for they did not oppose them, but in the anti-suffragists’ perception of their politics—that is, those of the “New Woman”—as anti-imperial.

Thus, a writer like Nellie McClung (1873–1951), the best-known of the English-Canadian suffragists, struggled to assure male readers of feminism’s commitment to empire. In her 1915 feminist manifesto, *In Times Like These*, McClung made this claim:

The woman movement, which has been scoffed and jeered at and misunderstood most of all by the people whom it is destined to help, is a spiritual revival of the best instincts of womanhood—the instinct to serve and save the race. . . . The world needs the work and help of the women, and the women must work, if the race will survive. (McClung, 1915, pp. 100–101)

What McClung’s comment highlights is how the antifeminist imperialists to whom she is alluding failed—or refused—to see that their own interests and those of white woman suffragists were almost always exactly the same.

McClung’s comment also indicates that the New Woman had become to her imperial contemporaries such a potent figure of decline that the constitution of imperialist suffrage rhetoric involved a representation not only of “what woman wanted” within the context of the Empire, but of what roles women were to play in the march of progress. As McClung’s own arguments show, feminist representations of the New Woman entailed “her” reconfiguration as a proponent of women’s rights who nonetheless remained within a strictly defined *domestic* framework, a more conventionally *womanly* woman. This revised image reproduced the standard Victorian ideology of the woman as “the angel in the house,” but with a difference. Where mid-Victorian imperialist rhetoric such as Ruskin’s “Of Queens’ Gardens” configured the woman only inside the domestic microcosm, performing her duty to the “commonwealth” by taking care of husband and family, late Victorian and turn-of-the-century feminist imperialism took this maternal icon of moral superiority, and sought to extend her influence outside the home. She would have the same function and the same effect upon nation and empire, but on a wider, and much more political scale.

McClung, for example, defined women’s work for the Empire as “housecleaning”: “[I]f women ever get into politics,” she wrote, “the sound of the political carpet-beater will be

heard in the land” (McClung, 1915, p. 66). For McClung, as for many other imperial feminists of the period, the term *women’s work* itself denoted not only the childbearing “duty” of women, but their related “duty” to care for the race as a whole, to “expand,” in Ruskin’s phrase, women’s work for the good of the Empire by mobilizing what were generally regarded as natural maternal instincts for more than reproduction. As she put it in 1915, “[I]t is not so much a woman’s duty to bring children into the world, as to see what sort of a world she is bringing them into” (McClung, 1915, p. 28). In a similar vein, Anglo-Australian feminist Louisa Lawson (1848–1920) articulated the importance of the womanly woman to imperial progress, observing in 1895 that,

On all sides, there is a growing sense of a woman’s influence in all departments of life, and a realization that the qualities which purify and beautify a home are capable of a wider and fuller expansion beyond the narrower limits to which they have hitherto been confined. (Lawson, 1990, p. 356)

Lawson and McClung, when they constructed such arguments, produced an image of the feminist that fundamentally transformed the transgressive New Woman into an icon of maternal imperialism. This “new” woman is the figure that came to be known as “the mother of the race.” She was not only to be a biological mother, not to be limited to her own private, domestic sphere, but was to exercise her maternal skills upon the race at large. She demanded education, the vote, and a hand in the running of nation and empire, not for the New Woman’s putatively self-serving ends, but for the good of “the race.”

The redefinition of motherhood, Anna Davin argues, is the key to understanding the convergence of imperialism and feminism in England at the end of the 19th century (Davin, 1978, pp. 12–13). It is significant that suffrage feminism is sometimes called *imperial* feminism and sometimes *maternal* feminism; both terms have equal validity for the project of the women’s movement between the 1880s and the 1920s. What women wanted, suffrage feminism held, was to introduce such racially regenerative measures as temperance legislation and laws raising the age of consent, and to engage white women in the “civilizing mission.”

These objectives were all brought together in the figure of the imperial mother—the “mother of the race”—the feminist icon into whom the New Woman was transformed. The image of the imperial mother producing and raising healthy children as she also worked valiantly to make the nation and the Empire as socially and morally hygienic as her own home quickly became the hallmark of Anglo-Saxon feminism and the basis of white feminists’ claims to social and political power. If women were indeed morally superior, naturally maternal, biologically possessed of the only known way to reproduce the race, as some six decades of Victorian gender ideology had maintained, then the men ought to let them handle the “commonwealth” as well as they did their homes.

When Anglo-Saxon feminists, as Lucy Bland puts it, “appropriated” the arguments of Victorian motherhood, social purity, and the British civilizing mission, they invested in the interests of the Empire even as they constructed themselves as the standard bearers of racial purity in the empire-wide crusade against dirt and disease and their moral and/or evolutionary counterparts, savagery and heathenism (Bland, 1995). They also significantly brought the interests of women and the Empire together by arguing that imperial advancement and the effective dissemination of the ideals of the British civilizing mission were necessarily linked. True civilization, feminists held, could *only* be achieved when white women were freed from the shackles of disenfranchisement, and empowered to vote upon laws that affected the eugenical reproduction of the race. As Mariana Valverde has described the suffrage feminist project, “the race” could only advance “when the mother of the race [wa]s free” (Valverde, 1992). Or, as McClung claimed, “[T]he race can rise no higher than its women” (McClung, 1915, p. 97). To keep them down was to hamper progress itself.

It was to make this point that, between the 1880s and 1920s, there emerged a rhetoric of *feminist* imperial alarmism parallel to—and, as McClung and Lawson indicate, in response to—the mainly masculine concerns about the “race suicide,” which would result with the liberation of women. Thus, Louisa Lawson argued in 1892 that the refusal to enfranchise woman is the greatest “stumbling-block . . . in the way of the higher evolution of the race” (Lawson, 1990, p. 119). “The race,” she wrote,

. . . has not yet reached its acme of development, its highest state of unfoldment. It is surely climbing upward, but it has now reached a point whence it can climb no higher until it makes more moral progress; until it throws off its burden of oppression of man against man, and man against women. There can be no further advancement until . . . woman take[s] her rightful place in the world as man's recognised equal; a place that her development is rapidly preparing her to occupy with honour. (Lawson, 1990, pp. 118–119)

“One of the most potent factors” in that stage of social evolution seen to be rehearsed in the expansion of British civilization, Lawson went on to say, was “the part which woman is beginning to take in the movement; and which she is daily recognizing as her part, her duty in the great work” (Lawson, 1990, p. 119). If Anglo-Saxon woman were permitted to advance as her “superior” morality and her indisputable importance as a “mother of the race” indicated she ought, “man,” Lawson argued, “will be forced to advance . . . to keep pace with [woman], for in morality woman will lead the world . . .” (Lawson, 1990, p. 120). Lawson thus, as McClung would also do in Canada a couple of decades later, neatly undercut the fundamental argument of antifeminist imperialism. Women, she maintained, far from hindering imperial progress, were crucial to the preservation and forward movement of the Empire, and those who opposed woman suffrage—the key to woman's advancement—put the entire imperial enterprise in peril. It was not, in other words, women who threatened the stability of empire, but men, at least, those men who resisted the enfranchisement of “the mother of the race.”

While the process of maternalizing and imperializing the New Woman is the hallmark of suffrage feminism throughout the Empire, the reconfiguration of the New Woman as an imperial mother is particularly noticeable in the literature of the white settler colonies. The imperial mother had a unique iconic value in these colonies, where her function as racial regenerator was made especially acute by the exigencies of empire-building, and by the immediate contest between the Anglo-Saxon race and its colonized “others.” In this context, the analogy between white colony and white woman as sites for racial renewal was extremely per-

vasive and suggestive. Both white women and the white settler colonies were represented in imperial rhetoric as at once innately pure and inherently purifying. Degenerating Anglo-Saxondom was to be rescued and restored equally in the womb of the imperial mother and in the bosom of the “daughter” nations. When expansionist rhetoric attempted to present an image of the colonies as “virgin” territories, the aim was to appeal both to the conquering instinct of “true” manliness, and to the superstitious belief that union with such innocence and purity would have the effect of healing degeneracy and disease. (In the late 19th century, there was, as Deborah Gorham notes, a belief that intercourse with a virgin would cure venereal disease [Gorham, 1978, p. 371].) Like the bodies of white women, the territories of the white settler colonies were marked in expansionist propaganda with the potential of an untapped and unspoiled virgin fertility, which would bring forth a new and stronger race in healthier climates. Such regeneration could only happen in the settler colonies, and it could only happen if sufficient numbers of white women went to the colonies to “breed” this improved race in what were represented as inherently purer spaces.

Women had been wooed to the settler colonies at least since the formation of the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society in England in the 1860s (Hammerton, 1977, 1979). By the end of the century, they were fully aware that their presence and their reproductive organs were vital to the construction of the New World, itself essential to the continued growth of the Empire and “the race,” as a repository for the unemployed and destitute whom so many commentators claimed were crowding British cities. It should not be surprising, then, that the imperial mission was so acutely present in the consciousness of Anglo-colonial women who were actually engaged in the expansion of the Empire and who regarded themselves as struggling at the front lines of the imperial crusade. Indeed, it is arguably because white woman's part in the imperial mission was so much more pronounced in the English settler colonies than in England, that enfranchisement was won in the outposts of empire before it was achieved in the “mother country.” White women were first given the vote in Australia in 1902 and in Canada in 1916 (in the province of Manitoba), while

woman suffrage was not legislated in England until 1918.

Anglo-colonial feminists prided themselves on having won the vote before their imperial sisters “at home,” as well as on having had to use less violent strategies than those employed by the militant suffragists in England. It is, however, evident that they did not need to, not because men in the colonies held more noticeably enlightened perceptions of women, but because white woman’s role in the colonies was seen to be so crucial. A consciousness of their function in the progress of empire is apparent in Anglo-colonial feminists’ use of a much more persuasive, race-based (and deeply racist) rhetoric than British women had occasion to use. Women made a bid for the vote in the settler colonies by arguing that they were needed to swell the ranks of the white electorate. The need to “right the balance” between the white and the “foreign” vote, as Candace Savage notes McClung had argued in 1916, was greater than in the more racially homogeneous England (Savage, 1979, p. 134). Anglo-Saxondom had to struggle to maintain its dominance in Canada and Australia against increasing numbers of non-British immigrants and the continued presence of indigenous peoples. Thus, the white female vote, as Anglo-colonial feminists recognized, was of considerable imperial importance, if only to prevent “foreigners” from installing non-British governments in the self-governing colonies.

While Imperial Federationists in Australia and organizations such as the “Canada First” group promoted a vision of the Empire given fresh new power through the relocation of power to the “youthful” colonies, women were making a case along similarly political lines, arguing that they would bring the Empire new life. Like the figure of Britannia, the colonial New Woman would light the way into the new century, the standard-bearer of “Heaven’s light,” the herald of the dawn of the new imperial day that colonial feminists claimed could only break in the New World. Britain—the “Old” World—was crowded and degenerating; the “New” World could stem the flood of decline, but only if the colonial territory maintained its pristine condition. This could be achieved only if Britain sent only its best “stock” for reproduction, and if women maintained the conditions for reproducing the race. Appropriating the idea of the white settler col-

onies as “the white man’s last opportunity,” Anglo-colonial feminism positioned the imperial mother as the last best hope for the controlled, enhanced, eugenically moderated reproduction of Saxondom. As McClung put it, the women were “our last reserves” (McClung, 1915). Maternal feminists in the colonies poised themselves to usher in a new day of imperialism as they, assured of their moral superiority by nearly half a century of imperialist rhetoric, carried the light of British civilization into the “darkest” corners of the Empire, and “raised” the race as they did their own children. “Heaven’s light our guide” was Britannia’s motto. Such a credo also represents what Antoinette Burton has called “the white woman’s burden” (Burton, 1994, p. 10), the duty of the Anglo-colonial “New Woman” to lead the Empire to a “new day,” to lift the race, as Louisa Lawson put it, to “its acme of development.”

Anglo-Australian feminist Louisa Lawson was the founding editor of the women’s magazine *The Dawn*, which her great-granddaughter has characterized as “the first voice of Australian feminism.” This periodical, which Olive Lawson tells us “was published monthly from May 1888 to July 1905 in Sydney” (Lawson, 1990, p. 1), promoted issues pertinent to “The Woman Question” and in particular to the question of white woman suffrage throughout its 17-year run under Lawson’s leadership. It differed from most other Anglo-Australian women’s journals of the late 19th century, for it was formed on a campaign for white women’s rights, and it was produced by an entirely female staff (Lawson, 1990, p. 1). Nonetheless, its stance *vis-à-vis* the roles of women in the “new” nation and in the Empire shows it to be positioned well within the boundaries of popular maternalist ideology. *The Dawn* clearly worked in the interests of imperialism that were so significantly fostered by the figure of the Anglo-Saxon “New Woman” as the “mother of the race” and by the vision of the “new day,” which only she could usher in for the Empire. These convergent notions are powerfully suggested in the journal’s title and its politics of self-representation at the time of its first appearance.

Olive Lawson describes the cover of the first issue of *The Dawn* in 1888:

A young woman, in the manner of a herald angel, levitates above Sydney Heads at day-

break. She blows a clarion. The sun rises beneath her feet. In her left hand she holds a scroll which tells readers that *The Dawn* is edited, printed and published by women. The message is clear: a new day is dawning for women, and it's happening in Sydney. (Lawson, 1990, p. 4)

Lawson's reading of her great-grandmother's politics of representation is perceptive. The symbolism of the New Woman as an angel "herald[ing]" a new day that is breaking "in Sydney" is entrenched not only in the message the latter-day Lawson suggests is "explicitly feminist," but in the implication that the "new day" will begin in the "new world." "[I]t's happening in Sydney" because it is in the New World that the Empire was to find its resources for the renewal and regeneration of the Anglo-Saxon race. The woman who "heralds" the dawn in Sydney carries more than a suggestive association with Britannia. Indeed, she embodies Britannia in the colonies, and thus signals civilization at the "acme" that was only to be achieved when white women were "set free" to perform their "highest duty." "*The Dawn*," wrote Lawson in 1889, referring simultaneously to her magazine and to the vision of the new imperial day towards which it looked, "will rise or set with the cause . . ." (Lawson, 1990, p. 28).

By 1892, Lawson saw the light of "the cause" making considerable headway into the darkness of imperial degeneracy, which feminism represented as the result of what McClung defined as "too much masculinity" (McClung, 1915, p. 153). "When we first opened our columns to the discussion of questions vitally affecting our own sex," Lawson announced,

. . . the clouds of early morning still shrouded the horizon, but we have watched the mists of prejudice gradually dissolving, and the sunlight is already penetrating many dark corners. The shadows of night are passing away, and as we enter the last lustre of the nineteenth century, we can see the dawning of a new and brighter day. (Lawson, 1990, p. 357)

For Anglo-Australian women, that day would begin—or would seem to begin—with white woman suffrage in 1902.

The part played by Anglo-colonial women in the discourses of the New Imperialism was

rehearsed not only in the generating of feminist rhetoric through journals like *The Dawn* and books like McClung's (1915) *In Times Like These*, but in the imperial popular fiction which so many women were producing around the turn of the century in the settler colonies. Louisa Lawson's association of the New Woman with the imperial new day that was to break in the New World, and her engagement with issues of white woman suffrage—temperance, maternalism, and race regeneration—were re-emphasized in such fiction as Nellie McClung produced in Canada, and her contemporary, Miles Franklin, produced in Australia. A case in point is Franklin's novel, *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*. Although published in 1909, this novel foregrounds the enfranchisement of white women in Australia earlier in the decade in its story of the first female vote in the small town of Noonoon, a name which resounds with intimations of a new day. Franklin pointedly draws attention to Australia's leadership in white woman suffrage, dedicating the novel to the "English *Men* who believe in votes for *Women*" (Franklin, 1909/1986). The heroine of this novel, which fictionalizes the effects of suffrage feminism upon small-town Anglo-colonial Australia, is the title's "Dawn," and her weightily symbolic name identifies her as the figure who will light the way into the new imperial century.

Dawn is so named because she was born at the beginning of the day, but she is also endowed with considerable iconic value as the young Anglo-Australian manifestation of a New Woman who is certain of her rights, but whose demonstrated accomplishments are in the domestic sphere. In this, she differs considerably from Franklin's better-known heroine, Sybylla Melvyn, who, unlike Dawn, does not see *her* "brilliant career" including marriage (Franklin, 1901/1980). Dawn is an imperial mother-to-be. She is an excellent housekeeper, she is beautiful, pure, intelligent, and educated. Moreover, although we subsequently learn that she belongs to the class designated in the novel as "the swells" (the picturesque family name of her deadbeat upper-middle-class father is Mudeheepe), she is identified throughout the narrative as a "real" Australian girl. Dawn's salt-of-the-earth character is intimated not by the hierarchical figure in the family name, but by her mother's even more earthy patronym, which is *Clay*. As far as

Franklin's narrative is concerned, it is women like Dawn, developed from Anglo-colonial pioneers like her grandmother Clay, in the putatively better environment of the settler colonies, who hold all the hope for Anglo-Saxon civilization. Significantly, therefore, when Dawn marries at the end of the novel, she refuses to be given away by her lately recovered father, insisting instead that her grandmother perform this duty. "For the sake of the race I maintain this ground," she informs her father (Franklin, 1909/1986, p. 337), echoing a rhetoric she has learned from feminists in Noonoon, but also affirming her commitment to the ideals of white feminism as it purports, in McClung's words, "to serve and save the race" (1915, p. 100).

Dawn's marriage to a young and supremely fit example of white middle-class Anglo-colonial Australian manhood positions her as the imminent mother of a colonially produced Anglo-Saxon race that is identifiably English, but which also demonstrates the superior health and fitness that New World discourses attributed to Australians over their British-born counterparts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As is also the case in many English-Canadian novels of the period, British men in Franklin's novel tend toward what she calls the "effete," the less-than-desirable "failures," as English-Canadian novelist Sara Jeannette Duncan's imperialist hero Lorne Murchison puts it, who were so often sent out to the colonies (Duncan, 1904/1996; Franklin, 1909/1986, p. 229). The sturdiness and physical beauty of both Dawn and her athletic husband are juxtaposed with the obvious degeneracy of the drunk and lazy, although aristocratic, British emigré, Rooney-Molyneux, and even of the English narrator's own chronic and rather mysterious heart disease. The foregrounding in the narrative of Dawn's shift from the expressed desire to marry an "Englishman who'd take [her] home to England" (Franklin, 1909/1986, p. 145) to her union with Anglo-Australian football hero Ernest Breslaw is crucial. It marks her own awakening to the understanding of her function in the nation, the Empire, and in the interests of "the race." This "awakening" is the key to understanding the text's engagement with the ideology of maternal and imperial feminism. As we are told against the backdrop of the scene of the first female vote in the little town of Noonoon,

That women shall compete equally with men in the utilitarian industrialism of every walk of life is not the ultimate ideal of universal adult franchise. Such emancipation is sought as the most condensed and direct method of abolishing the female sex disability which in time shall bring the human intelligence, regardless of sex, to an understanding of the superiority of the *mother* sex as it concerns the race . . . (Franklin, 1909/1986, p. 259) (emphasis added)

This "emancipation" happened first in Australia, as Franklin reminds her readers. Thus, the new imperial day Louisa Lawson envisioned on the first cover of *The Dawn* did indeed seem to be breaking over—or at least on the same continent as—Sydney Heads, while the "darkness" of the day prior to female suffrage in the "mother country" still prevailed.

If Louisa Lawson is "the first voice of [Anglo-]Australian feminism," suffrage and temperance fighter Nellie McClung holds that oracular status for English-Canadian feminism. Although McClung began writing just as Lawson shut up shop at *The Dawn* in 1905, and although she probably never saw a copy of Lawson's journal, her rhetoric and her feminist politics are virtually indistinguishable from her Anglo-Australian counterpart's. Like Lawson, she saw the "real empire-builders" at work in the white settler colonies, and women the driving force amongst those empire-builders. I have already drawn attention to McClung's influential feminist manifesto, which, perhaps surprisingly, remains in print in Canada after more than 80 years. But McClung was also, like Miles Franklin, an extremely popular writer of fiction, and, like her Australian contemporary, McClung fictionalized the "history" of white women's enfranchisement. The story of *her* suffrage heroine, Pearlie Watson, and her salutary effects upon her home, her community, her country, and her Empire is told over three novels.

In the manner of Franklin's Dawn, Pearl is a figure whose essential purity is conveyed in her name. From the pubescent girl we meet in the first novel, *Sowing Seeds in Danny* (McClung, 1908), through the idealistic and missionary-minded adolescent of *The Second Chance* (McClung, 1910), to her final incarnation as a teacher and suffragist in the last installment, *Purple Springs* (McClung, 1921), Pearl is a



pearl. She stands for personal and social hygiene, equal rights for women, *and* educated motherhood. Like Dawn, her name and her superior function both separate her from the “everyday folk” by whom she is surrounded, and for whom she is so much a beacon of what Mariana Valverde has noted as the primary interests of the Anglo-Saxon civilizing mission in English Canada: “light, soap, and water” (Valverde, 1991). Indeed, when we first meet Pearl she is washing her younger siblings as she simultaneously instructs them in morality and personal cleanliness. She is, we are told repeatedly, *instinctively* maternal.

While the Watson family’s poverty is very much evident in the first and second novels, so are their fiercely Protestant work ethic and their desire to “improve” themselves in this New World context, which McClung represents here as in her feminist polemic, as “the Land of the Second Chance” for hard-working emigrants (McClung, 1915, pp. 158–159). People such as the Watsons, McClung asserts, are “the real empire-builders” because they represent the best of “the race” in bringing together Anglo-Saxon heredity, Christianity, hard-workingness, and a sturdy faith in England and the value of the “civilizing mission,” *without* the fatal weaknesses of the outcast British upper-class sons so often seen to be foisted on the colonies. (McClung frequently highlights this difference, by including characters not unlike Franklin’s Rooney-Molyneux in her fiction.) Pearl represents the cream of the superior group, because she recognizes and fights for the goal that McClung always maintained ought to be the first objective of imperialism—the allocation of the vote to white women, and their concomitant empowerment to improve the conditions of reproduction as they simultaneously preserve the condition of the New World. In the final novel, Pearl fights for and is extremely influential in achieving suffrage for white women in her home province Manitoba (and it has often been pointed out that Pearl’s story is largely a retelling of McClung’s own involvement in winning the vote for white women in Manitoba in 1916, the first Canadian province to enfranchise women). She also helps to reposition “the Land of Beginning Again” (McClung, 1915, p. 159) at the forefront of imperial race regeneration.

Where Pearl’s “home mission” work takes place on a small and intimate scale while she

remains close to home in the first novel, her purifying influence operates in progressively wider circles as she moves away from home in the second and third. What her widening *maternal* influence achieves by the end of the series is configured not only in the happy marriages she helps to bring about (her own included), but also, more importantly, in terms of her role in the opening of a profoundly symbolic site named “Purple Springs,” a veritable fountain of youth that restores health. The suggestion is made that it can cure, among other things, tuberculosis, frequently represented in late-19th- and early 20th-century writing as a scourge of the imperial race, commonly characterized as “The Great White Plague.” The invigorating and renewing properties of this Canadian spa are offered to “the race” at large, and with this gesture McClung shows how Canada, guided by New Women like Pearl, can physically renew the Empire, and, literally, cure its ills. The interrelation of the name “Purple Springs” with the women in the novel and with the value of the settler colony itself to the Empire should alert us to the way the novel is engaged in producing a discourse which affirms the convergence of the (new) New Woman in and with the (new) New World as regenerative figures. Both, according to McClung’s narrative, offer cures for degeneracy and decline; both offer virgin purification and renewal.

The series ends with Pearl finally united with her young doctor—whose name, like Franklin’s heroine’s, is *Clay*—watching a rainbow spread across the dark sky. The morrow, we are to see, will bring the rosy future that could only be produced by the marriage of Pearl, representative of both suffrage feminism and the pioneering values of the Watson family, with the principles of social and moral hygiene represented here, as in so many turn-of-the-century Anglo-colonial novels, by a doctor who is also a prime example of Anglo-colonial manhood. Pearl and Horace Clay, and the promise of the healthy and hardworking Anglo-Saxon offspring they will produce in Canada, thus direct us toward the new day that McClung so frequently invokes in her feminist writing in terms of the promise of “The Last Best West.”

Imperial visions of Anglo-Saxon racial hegemony underlie both the transformation of the New Woman into the imperial mother, and

the reconstruction in the same period of the most potent image of the Second British Empire: the New World. Between the 1880s and the 1920s, the New World and the New Woman were equally constructed as sites of Anglo-Saxon race regeneration in the same discourses of the New Imperialism. Their almost interchangeable value in the narrative of the new day that was to break upon the Empire from its own outposts marks a crucial convergence that should not simply attest to the contemporaneity of these concepts, but also to their mutual investment in the ideology of empire-building as it was mobilized in the white settler colonies. It is not difficult to see how, in this context, white women who already regarded themselves as pioneers working with white men on behalf of the Empire in Australia and Canada, came to regard themselves as leaders in the feminist movement and as heralds of a new day of imperial civilization and advanced women's rights.

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