THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF CATHERINE HELEN SPENCE

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Statement of Authorship

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and bibliography of the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis will argue that Catherine Helen Spence, a writer, preacher and reformer who migrated from Scotland to Australia in 1839, performed the role of a public intellectual in Australia similar to that played by a number of women of letters in Victorian England. While her ideas were strongly influenced by important British and European nineteenth-century intellectual figures and movements, as well as by Enlightenment thought, her work also reflects the different socio-political, historical and cultural environment of Australia. These connections and influences can be seen in her engagement with what were some of the "big ideas" of the nineteenth century, including feminism, socialism, religious scepticism, utopianism and the value of progress.

In arguing that Spence was a public intellectual, I will consider the ways in which she used the literary genres of fiction and journalism, as well as her sermons, to try to help her fellow citizens make sense of the world, attempting to organise and articulate some of the significant ideas affecting the political, social and cultural climates in which they lived. Through the exploration of Spence's intellectual work, I will show how she can be regarded as making a significant contribution to nineteenth-century Australian intellectual life, one that has been under-recognised and under-valued.

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Introduction

This thesis will argue that Catherine Helen Spence, a writer, preacher and reformer who migrated from Scotland to Australia in 1839, made an outstanding contribution to Australian intellectual, literary and cultural history by performing the role of a public intellectual in Australia similar to that played by a range of intellectual figures in Victorian England. While her ideas were strongly influenced by important British and European nineteenth-century intellectual figures and movements, as well as by Enlightenment thought, her work was necessarily informed by the socio-political, historical and cultural environment of Australia. These connections and influences can be seen in the specific ways she engaged with some of the "big ideas" of the nineteenth century, including feminism, socialism, religious scepticism, utopianism and the value of progress. Because of the strength of British and European influences on Spence's thinking, at least until the 1890s when she visited the United States for the first time and met a number of feminists and abolitionists, there is little discussion of American intellectuals and ideas (a necessary limitation also in the interests of keeping this thesis within reasonable bounds).

In arguing that Spence was a public intellectual, I consider the ways in which she used the literary genres of fiction and journalism, as well as her sermons, to try to help her fellow citizens make sense of the world, attempting to organise and articulate some of the significant ideas which affected the social, political and cultural climates in which they lived. I will combine a study of the historical and nineteenth-century contexts that influenced the formulation of her ideas with a close analysis of her writing, both published and unpublished, to arrive at an understanding of how she participated in public intellectual discourse in nineteenth-century Australia. Such an analysis and the conclusions I draw can shed light on women's experience as subjects and cultural producers in nineteenth-century Australia, despite the apparent domination of the public sphere by men.

Catherine Spence managed to carve out a creative, active career for herself as a professional writer over a period that spanned the second half of the nineteenth century and the early

years of the twentieth century. Her life in Australia encompassed the period from just after the initial settlement of the colony of South Australia in 1835, a settlement that was based on Edward Wakefield's utopian principles of "systematic colonisation," through to the federation of the colonies and early development of Australia as a nation.[1] Exploring Spence's feminist and other utopian ideas, ideas that existed not only in an abstract sense but many of which she tried to live out, should provide an understanding of the intellectual development that took place during her lifetime, resulting in her becoming, in John Ramsland's words, "in many ways … the Victorian ideal of the fully equipped intellectual who investigated the interconnection between literature, science and theology."[2]

Spence's name is usually followed by a string of labels – social and political reformer, feminist, preacher, novelist, journalist, welfare worker – but these categories need to be understood in their historical context, as such roles inevitably change over time. In analysing the politics of women such as Spence who are historical figures, we run the risk of laying a burden of judgment from the distance of the twenty-first century on such individuals that "privileg[es] a standard of radicalism divorced from the contexts of the past," as Rosalind Smith puts it.[3] On the other hand, this distance of time provides us with a way of viewing the past that is unavailable to contemporaries, allowing events and people from the past to be placed in a broader and longer perspective. Locating Spence's ideas within the broader Australian and international contexts of the period should ensure that her ideas are treated in a culturally, socially and historically grounded manner.

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[1] For an account of the ideas that formed the basis of South Australia's settlement, see Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), ch.3&4.

[2] John Ramsland, "Catherine Helen Spence: Writer, Public Speaker and Social and Political Reformer, 1825-1910," *South Australiana* xii, no. 1 (1983): 37.

[3] Rosalind Smith, "*Clara Morison*: The Politics of Feminine Heterotopia," *Southerly* 61, no. 3 (2001): 42.

The use of the terms "feminist" and "feminism" with respect to the nineteenth century is somewhat anachronistic, because they did not come into use until the 1890s in Britain and were not widely used until World War One. However, I believe it is valid to use them from our vantage-point to describe a concern with improving women's position in society. Not all women's rights activists regarded themselves as feminists even after the term gained greater currency, and, even now, its use can be problematic. Many feminist scholars and literary historians use the terms in the sense that I am doing here.

In attempting to avoid the pitfalls of anachronistic judgments, the theoretical foundation for this thesis will be a combination of feminism and cultural materialism. A feminist approach will enable a critique of the ways in which representations of gender within the selected texts reproduce or transform some of the social stereotypes of the period about women and men. Cultural materialism and its concern to incorporate into the study of literary texts (and other cultural artefacts) the socio-historic and/or political conditions under which they were produced will provide a means of studying how the dominant ideologies are reproduced in the texts under consideration, as well as the ways in which more dissident ideas operate.[4]

The topic of this thesis sprang from the apparent invisibility of women, as authors and characters, in much of the utopian fiction written in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australia. After reading Spence's two utopian texts, *Handfasted* [1879] and *A Week in the Future* (1888-9), I became interested in learning more about her and why her name was so little known outside of academic circles and South Australia.[5] Further research revealed that she had written an enormous number of articles and leaders for South Australian newspapers in particular, as well as for other Australian and British newspapers and journals, usually expounding an idea for the improvement of individuals and society. While some of this journalism has received scholarly attention, a significant portion has not. As I came to understand the extent of her engagement with some of the ideas which were significant in western society in the nineteenth century, I was surprised to learn that her name was largely absent from political and cultural histories of Australia. Despite her wide acclaim on the occasion of her eightieth birthday in 1905, and after her death in 1910, she had slipped into the shadows of Australian cultural and social history by the early twentieth century. Finding her in histories of intellectual thought and activity in Australia

[4] For discussions of cultural materialism, see Andrew Milner, *Cultural Materialism* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1993); Alan Sinfield, "Cultural Materialism, *Othello*, and the Politics of Plausibility" (1992), in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Scott Wilson, *Cultural Materialism: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

[5] Although Spence has received recent recognition through her appearance on the Australian $5 note and during the 2001 Centenary of Federation, her name appears to be still unknown among the broader Australian population. Certainly, the number of blank looks I have encountered after mentioning Spence as the subject of my thesis would indicate this. It would probably not be the same in South Australia, her home state.

was an even more difficult task, affected also by the fact that there have been so few written about colonial Australia.

The title and publication date of one of these few, George Nadel's *Australia's Colonial Culture: Ideas, Men and Institutions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia* (1957), suggest a reason for her absence. Nadel's focus on men was not unusual for the 1950s, added to which was the fact that he was examining public life in mid-nineteenth-century Australia when women were largely invisible, making it a foregone conclusion that women would not feature in the book. A more recent exploration of Australian intellectual life, Brian Head and James Walter's *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (1988), suggests that one reason why so few texts have been written on the overall subject is the "cultural cringe," which meant that "intellectual work produced in Australia was thought to be necessarily derivative (an inferior imitation) or awkwardly provincial (judged by standards adumbrated in the overseas metropolis)."[6] Fortunately, the work in Head and Walter's book seeks to examine the assumptions that underlie this mentality, concerning itself with discussing the views of Australian intellectuals about their society, as well as perceptions by the broader community about intellectuals. Its point of view, however, is a contemporary one, seldom touching on nineteenth-century intellectual life. Nevertheless, the chapter on women, aptly entitled "A Small and Often Still Voice?" by Gillian Whitlock and Chilla Bulbeck, provides a valuable discussion about the differences between intellectual men and women which are determined by the ways in which a patriarchal society operates.[7] More recently, there have been a number of biographies which explore the intellectual lives of individual women, mostly feminists, in nineteenth-century Australia.[8]

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[6] Brian Head, "Introduction: Intellectuals in Australian Society", in *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, ed. Brian Head and James Walter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1.

[7] Gillian Whitlock and Chilla Bulbeck, "'A Small and Often Still Voice'?: Women Intellectuals in Australia", in *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, ed. Brian Head and James Walter.

[8] See, for example, Judith Allen, *Rose Scott: Vision and Revision in Feminism* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); Janette M. Bomford, *That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman Vida Goldstein* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1993); Jan Roberts, *Maybanke Anderson: Sex, Suffrage and Social Reform* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1993).

Spence has reappeared since the 1980s as a significant figure in nineteenth-century Australian literature and first-wave feminism through substantial scholarly research into her writing, particularly her novels *Clara Morison* (1854) and *Handfasted* ([1879], 1984) and her reform activities. Susan Magarey has provided an excellent appreciation of the material circumstances of Spence's life in her biography, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women* (1985), in which she explores not only the forces that shaped Spence, but the relationship between Spence's story and that of the development of South Australia. [9] She briefly examines each of Spence's novels for the strands of feminism they contain but her focus is biographical, rather than literary. Magarey has also written numerous articles about Spence. The inclusion of a chapter by Magarey on Spence in Eric Fry's *Rebels and Radicals*, a book that seeks to depict the lives of a number of individuals who "stood against the dominant beliefs and policies" of nineteenth-century Australia, presupposes an acceptance that Spence is a rebel, if not a radical. Magarey argues, in fact, that if "as much weight [is given] to gender relations as it [is] to class relations or to party-political labels …," then Spence was a radical who made an important contribution to the "struggle against the patriarchal organisation of the society in which she lived."[10]

Lesley Ljungdahl's dissertation on Spence, "Catherine Helen Spence: From 'A Colonist of 1839' to 'The Grand Old Woman of Australia,'" concentrates on particular aspects of Spence's career and writings to argue for her "historical significance and literary value," as opposed to the emphasis on the constraints on Spence's career she perceives in other critical and biographical works.[11] The prologue to Spence's utopian novella *A Week in the Future*, published in book form for the first time in 1987, was written by Ljungdahl and contains interesting background on its genesis in the utopian-socialist work by Jane Hume Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness*, with comparisons

[9] Susan Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women: A Biography of Catherine Helen Spence* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1985).

[10] Susan Magarey, "Radical Woman: Catherine Spence", in *Rebels and Radicals*, ed. Eric Fry (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 116, 133.

between the two works. There is also an exposition of some of the ideas behind it, including Scientific Meliorism, eugenics, neo-Malthusianism and Owenite socialism.

Helen Thomson has also undertaken a large amount of research on Spence, including the editing of *Handfasted* for the purposes of its first publication in 1984 and an anthology of Spence's work that includes her journalism and sermons, as well as the novel *Clara Morison*. In an article entitled "Catherine Helen Spence: Pragmatic Utopian," Thomson argues that the fact that the lost Scottish utopia of *Handfasted* only includes a relative equality for women and that *A Week in the Future* endorses social Darwinism means Spence follows the line of reform, rather than revolution, as the means of achieving utopia.[12] Thomson also suggests that Spence's images of women who were distinctively Australian in their sense of freedom and appreciation of living in Australia gave female voice to national pride. In a chapter of *The 1890s* entitled "Catherine Helen Spence: Suffragist At Last," Thomson tracks the evolution of Spence's radicalism including her support for women's suffrage, suggesting that it was not until the mid-1890s that Spence's views on feminism could be seen as moving "definitively beyond nineteenth-century liberalism."[13] "Catherine Helen Spence: Enlightenment Woman" by Thomson tracks Enlightenment influences in Spence's writing, concluding that while she may have been complicit in the inequalities that existed in colonial society, "as a white woman in a land peopled by an indigenous other as much pitied as despised, then we can hardly blame her."[14] A similar conclusion that Spence was complicit in the racism of colonial Australia is reached by Janette Hancock, although she regards it as a result not of neutrality or innocence, but as "coloured by her whiteness and her self-interest."[15]

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[11] Lesley Durrell Ljungdahl, "Catherine Helen Spence: From 'A Colonist of 1839' to 'The Grand Old Woman of Australia'" (PhD, University of New South Wales, 1992), 1.

[12] Helen Thomson, "Catherine Helen Spence: Pragmatic Utopian", in *Who Is She?*, ed. Shirley Walker (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983).

[13] Helen Thomson, "Catherine Helen Spence: Suffragist at Last", in *The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture*, ed. Ken Stewart (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996), 197.

[14] Helen Thomson, "Catherine Helen Spence: Enlightenment Woman", in *Departures: How Australia Reinvents Itself*, ed. Xavier Pons (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 244.

[15] Janette Hancock, "'Me, Myself and Others': A New Look at Catherine Helen Spence," *Lilith* 12 (2003).

The late Kay Daniels' honours thesis was an early contribution to the recovery of Spence's work, although Daniels was not impressed by Spence's writing. Written in 1962, the thesis seeks to understand the connections between history and literature through a study of Spence's novels, arguing that they "passively reflect … South Australian society." Demonstrating the prejudice against middle-class culture shared by all political shades within Australian studies in the mid-twentieth century, Daniels asserts that they are written "lifelessly," a consequence of "a grey middle-class conformity – intelligent, Christian, progressivist – [which] seems to blanket late nineteenth century thought in South Australia."[16] Margaret Allen's 1991 PhD thesis examines the writing of three South Australian women writers, Matilda Evans (Maud Jean Franc), Spence and Catherine Martin, in their Australian context in order to challenge "the dominant masculinist account of Australian cultural history."[17]

Spence's contribution to South Australian society was publicly extolled by a number of writers on her eightieth birthday and after her death. More recently, her achievements have been evaluated by John Ramsland who sees her life as "remarkable in its dedication to a number of social and political issues and causes."[18] A more abstract discussion is contained in Bruce Bennett's "Contexts of Possibility – George Eliot and Catherine Spence" in which he compares the lives of both writers, and wonders about "the contexts in which literary development may occur."[19] There are numerous reviews by twentieth-century critics of Spence's fiction, most of whom value her work for its position on issues related to women's rights. *Clara Morison*, largely ignored by Spence's contemporaries, has received considerable attention, as has *Handfasted* which was not published until 1984.

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[16] V.K. Daniels, "History and Literature: A Study in the Novels of C.H. Spence" (B.A. Honours, University of Adelaide, 1962), 66.

[17] Margaret Allen, "Three South Australian Women Writers, 1854-1923: Matilda Evans, Catherine Spence and Catherine Martin" (PhD, Flinders University, 1991).

[18] Ramsland, "Catherine Helen Spence: Writer, Public Speaker and Social and Political Reformer, 1825-1910," 69.

[19] Bruce Bennett, *An Australian Compass: Essays on Place and Direction in Australian Literature* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1991), 146.

Spence has certainly been recovered from the past by such critical and scholarly attention, but there is still a gap in the study of her intellectual work, particularly where her journalism is concerned, which this study seeks to fill. Locating Spence in the context of the history of some of the significant ideas of the nineteenth century and understanding why it has taken so long for women to be recognised as intellectual citizens in nineteenth-century Australia is an important part of the process of understanding Australian intellectual history. A study of this nature would seem to fit well with recent directions in Australian literary and cultural studies towards the socio-historical and political contextualising of literary texts, not just on a national level, but globally as well. One of the aims of this thesis, then, is to help in promoting an understanding of the distinctive nature of Australian culture as well as its connections and continuities with the rest of the world.

My approach will involve an analysis of both primary and secondary texts to identify the elements relevant to the central argument, together with synthesis and comparison. It will also involve the location of specific texts in the context of the social, political and literary environment, along with an assessment of the influences that can be discerned in the development of her ideas. Spence's novels span the years between 1854 and 1889, but her focus from the 1870s onwards was on journalism, published anonymously, pseudonymously and eventually under her own name. Spence observed in her autobiography that the editors of the *South Australian Register*, which was the main vehicle for her journalism, had rejected many of her leading articles "but not one literary or social article."[20] The emphasis of this study, focusing as it does on her published journalism, will therefore be on the latter. However, given that she managed to include her opinions on a variety of political and economic matters in a range of newspapers and journals, as well as achieving publication of articles on such topics as a national savings scheme and an alternative system of charity, there are probably not many opinions that went unexpressed. Analysis and discussion of her children's fiction and her short stories are not included in this thesis, but her children's writing has been studied by Barbara Wall who has made a

[20] Catherine Helen Spence, *An Autobiography* (Adelaide: W.K. Thomas and Co., 1910; reprint, 1975), 55.

valuable contribution to Spence scholarship by placing her research into all aspects of Spence's writing on the website of the State Library of South Australia.[21]

The breadth of topics covered by Spence in her journalism is impressive and says something about the generalist nature of journalists in the nineteenth century. She discusses topics concerned specifically with women such as the education of girls and the courts' handling of domestic violence cases. She also writes about the importance of co-operation as a more effective means of operating an economy than competition, as well as making suggestions for a national insurance and savings scheme. Her book reviews cover work by and about such nineteenth-century figures as George Eliot, Thomas and Jane Carlyle, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Helen Keller and Booker Washington. Spence sometimes took up ideas expounded by less famous people, writing two lengthy articles, for example, on the differences between the economic circumstances of the French working class and the working classes of England and the Australian colonies and which included excerpts of speeches by three French working-men to congresses in France.[22] Concerned that South Australian readers might overlook the valuable content of many of the British periodicals, she provided summaries of essays from such journals as the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Contemporary* and *Fraser's Magazine*. Her aim was to "give prominence to matters which nearly concern the colonies both individually and as a part of the great Empire with which they are so proud to be identified."[23]

Her novels are more problematic when it comes to interpreting her world-view. Apart from the utopian novels, *Handfasted* and *A Week in the Future*, they are written in a romance-realist genre that attempts to combine conventions of the romance genre with her social and political concerns. Of course, this is entirely acceptable when one is concerned with trying to make an income from novel-writing, but the "sugar-coating of the pill" as Sarah Grand

[21] I have listed the two short stories of Spence's which I have read in the bibliography, but I have been unable to locate any studies of them. For details of her children's fiction, see Barbara Wall, *Catherine Helen Spence* (State Library of South Australia, 2000 [sighted 24 January 2002]); available from http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/.

[22] [C.H. Spence], "Three French working men," *Register*, 24 and 28 March 1879. For page references to Spence's newspaper articles, see the bibliography.

referred to her sub-plot of the twins in her best-selling New Woman novel, *The Heavenly Twins* (a novel which was chiefly concerned with venereal disease and the sexual double standard), means that analysis of the ideas in Spence's novels is rather a different matter than it is with her journalism. Many of her novels were written early in her career and, although some ideas remained constant from the 1850s onwards, she did become more radical about some aspects of society that she wanted to see changed. Her other writing such as the allegory, *An Agnostic's Progress from the Known to the Unknown* (1884), and her unpublished sermons reflect the importance of religion in her life and thought, and, like her journalism, are concerned with significant matters of the day. Her sermons cover a wide range of subjects including the death of Queen Victoria and the significance of her reign, the people of Burma, what drives social progress and the relationship between egoism and altruism. What they tell us is that the Unitarianism she came to after rejecting the stern Calvinism of the Presbyterian religion of her youth was an integral and extremely important part of her intellectual processes, as well as her social and political activism.

Spence's vision of how to achieve the good society, which seems to me the crux of her work, was built from her understanding of historical and contemporary intellectual and social movements. It is these movements which comprise the thematic structure of this thesis, beginning with a discussion of how she managed to achieve a high level of engagement in the public sphere at a time when intellectual women in the nineteenth century did not generally have a high profile. Thus chapter one is concerned with the ways in which Spence might be regarded as an intellectual in the context of the nineteenth century and her position as an Anglo-Australian woman. An important text about intellectual women in the nineteenth century that has helped shape this thesis is Deirdre David's *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy* (1987). David discusses how women such as George Eliot, Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Barrett Browning learned to accommodate and rebel against patriarchal ideas about women in Victorian England by operating as both traditional and organic intellectuals, in the sense that Antonio Gramsci defined the terms. Using a similar model, I attempt to explain how Spence functioned as an

[23] [C.H. Spence], "The June Reviews," (First Notice), *Register*, 24 August 1878.

intellectual and how she engaged with that role on the other side of the world from the intellectual metropolis.

Chapters two and three are concerned with the ways in which Spence represents feminist ideas in individual struggles, as well as in a more social sense in her novels. Her views on the changes to women's role and status necessary for a better society focus on three particular aspects, all of which were significant in the feminist agitation from the middle of the nineteenth century in Britain, and later in Australia: political and legal change which included the claim for women's suffrage, the push for sexual equality, and improved opportunities for education and work. However, as I will demonstrate, in her early work Spence was less concerned with the political context required for change to occur. Understanding Spence's feminism means taking into account her broader sympathies for all human beings, for her writing implies that she saw herself, as Dorothea Barrett says of George Eliot, as "human first and female second."[24] The comparison in chapter two between the ways in which Spence and Eliot regarded women's need for improvements in their education and wider access to employment is designed to better illuminate Spence's writing, based on the fact that Eliot was a key influence on Spence. Spence admired her for her moral values, which were expressed so eloquently in her novels. Not only was there a coincidence of themes about women in their work, but they also had in common a humanism that was, in some ways, rooted in the spiritual.

In chapter three, I discuss the other changes that nineteenth-century feminists believed were necessary before women could achieve a more equal status as realised in Spence's utopian fiction. These political and social reforms were incorporated into British and American feminist utopias of the nineteenth century with varying degrees of emphasis, but Spence's utopian fiction is not typical of the genre. In fact, some may not regard them as being feminist utopias in the sense that we know them today. Because her feminism and utopianism were aspects of her strongly-held belief in the possibility of progress, leading

[24] Dorothea Barrett, *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 175.

her to advocate social and political reforms that she felt would contribute to better individuals and a better society, her focus is not on creating a separatist utopia but one in which all can live more harmoniously. It is a utopia that does involve leaving the old world, however, in a way which parallels many British ideas about emigration to the colonies, enabling her to imagine such changes as the removal of the double standard of sexual morality and cooperation in all aspects of living and working.

An important factor in the ethical and moral views which Spence promoted was the crisis she experienced in her religious faith and her consequent conversion from Presbyterianism to Unitarianism. Chapter four examines her writing in order to understand how this experience affected her intellectual development, as well as the significance of her selection of Unitarianism on her views about class and gender, as well as her moral values more broadly. Her beliefs are discussed in the context of the challenges to religious faith that were taking place midcentury and causing many intellectuals to publicly question its importance in their lives. I explore the influence on Spence of a number of these intellectuals and their struggles with finding a new foundation for morality. This chapter also discusses how changes occurring in Britain affected religion in Australia in order to understand the similarities and differences between the two countries, and the possible implications of these for Spence.

Spence's belief in the potential for human progress co-existed, at least in her early years, with a desire for stability in many of society's institutions. Chapter five explores this tension in her writing, representative of the tension in British social life and politics more broadly in the nineteenth century, and described by Kitson Clark as a "conflict between … the forces of 'progress' and the will to survive of institutions, habits and ideas that had come down from the past …."[25] It examines the various aspects of the idea of progress – social, economic, political and moral – that Spence regarded as necessary for overall progress, as well as the ways in which she questioned how progress was measured. The historical origins of the ideas which she promoted provide the context for understanding

[25] G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London: Methuen and Co, 1965), 63.

how she applied a combination of humanism and spirituality to help her fellow citizens make sense of the changes taking place in the nineteenth century, and to encourage them to participate in the building of a good society.

Chapter 1 An Intellectual Woman in Nineteenth-Century Australia

In a diary that has now disappeared, Catherine Spence declared in her twenties that "before yielding to a belief in the inferiority of women," she would discipline her mind "to manly virtues, to manly strength, and to manly studies, that I may learn to live without leaning on anyone."[1] Her linking of manliness, strength of mind and independence was typical of mid-nineteenth-century attitudes toward intellectual endeavours, but it was a challenging declaration for a young woman to make. Her statement makes it clear that this was a young woman interested in the life of the mind from an early age, confirmed by her admission that she was "a very ambitious girl at 13 [who wanted] to be a teacher first, and a great writer afterwards."[2]

This chapter will explore the ways in which Catherine Spence can be considered an intellectual in the context of the nineteenth century, when intellectual women were judged quite differently from men. I will argue that Spence's early thinking was strongly influenced by representations of the Woman Question in Britain and by British intellectual figures, but her role as an intellectual was also affected by differences between Britain and Australia. An analysis of the subjects she wrote about and the manner in which she expressed herself will provide the means for understanding some of the issues that an Anglo-Australian woman writer and journalist faced in terms of gender and class in a society where there were few intellectual women.

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[1] Quoted in Jeanne F. Young, *Catherine Helen Spence: A Study and an Appreciation* (Melbourne: The Lothian Publishing Co., 1937), 45. For the background to the disappearance of Spence's early diaries, see Helen Jones, "A Postscript to the Life of Catherine Helen Spence," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 15 (1987); Helen Jones, "A Further Postscript to the Life of Catherine Helen Spence," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 16 (1988). Susan Magarey, in her preface to Spence's diary for 1894, also discusses the disappearance and suggests that they may have contained uncomplimentary comments about Jeanne Young's husband, causing Young to hold on to them rather than turning them over to a more appropriate repository. The diaries apparently vanished from Young's possession some time in the early twentieth century.

[2] Spence, *Autobiography*, 12.

In order to understand how Spence might be considered a public intellectual, we need to appreciate how intellectuals were perceived in the nineteenth century. The characteristics of those who were seen as intellectual figures and the kinds of cultural production they were involved in were in many ways different from twentieth-century models. The roles of public moralist, instructor and social critic were common for those who might be regarded as important intellectual figures in Victorian England, people such as John Stuart Mill, Harriet Martineau, George Eliot and Frances Power Cobbe. In a significant portion of her activities, Spence performed similar roles, as well as engaging in dialogue with their ideas. Many of her literary reviews and essays reflect her familiarity with these English men and women of letters, her understanding of the roles that they played in British intellectual life and an appreciation of their influence. Their impact on her own thinking was significant even though she did not appear to consciously model her career on any particular individual.

The use of the noun "intellectual" to describe a distinct type of person did not occur until the late Victorian period, according to T.W. Heyck. In fact, says Heyck, up until the 1870s, no-one was called "an intellectual."[3] Stefan Collini also notes that it was not at all a common term in the nineteenth century.[4] A range of terms was used in relation to those individuals who performed what we might regard as intellectual activities, reflecting the perception that they were generally men; there were "men of letters," "literary men" and "cultivators of science."[5] The latter included T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin, while men such as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold and Charles Dickens were all "men of letters" to the Victorians, even though the content of their work encompassed everything from social and artistic criticism to political philosophy and imaginative literature.

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[3] T.W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), preface, 13.

[4] Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 28.

[5] Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life*, 15.

Intellectual women were perceived differently. The impression of many, that women writers dominated the genre of novels, did not mean that women were acknowledged as intellectual workers, except for the rare few such as George Eliot, with different critical standards being applied to novels written by women. Even the fact that women occasionally participated in the same kinds of writing as the men mentioned above did not mean that they were accepted as the intellectual equals of men. As Dorothy Mermin notes, female intellectuals in Victorian England "were not expected to be original or creative" and "rarely indulged in the self-dramatizing rhetoric of the great Victorian prose masters or created vivid, authoritative personae for themselves …."[6]

Such activities seem worlds away from the work of public intellectuals of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. To Peter Allen the term "an intellectual" is "ill-defined and highly questionable" because of the confounding of meanings of mental and cultural competence, leading also to difficulties related to distinctions between high and popular culture.[7] When we consider the variety of factors that influence its meaning - subject matter, academic qualifications, the role of the literary establishment in conferring intellectual status on any particular text or person, the extent of influence or reach, as well as the connotations bestowed by a particular culture - the term "intellectual" seems highly problematic. In recent discussions about the role of a public intellectual, interpretations have varied considerably. Edward Said, for example, suggests that:

> Many people still feel the need to look at the writer-intellectual as someone who ought to be listened to as a guide to the confusing present, and also as a leader of a faction, tendency or group vying for more power and influence.[8]

In his view, however, a true intellectual is someone who "speaks the truth to power" and who is "involved in a lifelong dispute with all the guardians of sacred vision or text …."[9]

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[6] Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 96.

[7] Peter Allen, "The Meanings of 'an Intellectual': Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century English Usage," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (1986): 342.

[8] Edward Said, *The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals* (2001 [sighted 10 April 2004]); available from http://www.abc.net.au/m/deakin/docs/said.doc. Alfred Deakin lecture, Melbourne Town Hall, 19 May 2001.

[9] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), 7, 65.

He or she "ought to be an amateur" rather than a professional, motivated by "care and affection rather than by profit, and selfish, narrow specialization."[10] Donald Horne thinks that for intellectuals to have an influence they have to "conceptualise, to put into words for people something that's already floating around in their heads," while Anne Coombs proposes school principals as examples of public intellectuals because they work "in the arena of ideas and are responsible for forming minds."[11] She applies a similarly broad interpretation to the work of librarians who are able to open minds "to the knowledge to be found in libraries."

Another possible interpretation is that suggested by Brian Head – that an intellectual is someone who is able to "organize and articulate the ideas that help us to make sense of our world" [12] which would seem inclusive enough to apply to both men and women of earlier times as well as the present. One of the difficulties with this definition, however, is that it avoids the question of an intellectual's degree of affiliation or alienation from society - in other words, who is the "us"? This question becomes important when describing nineteenth-century women as intellectuals, given their status as both within and outside the dominant patriarchal and middle-class structure of nineteenth-century England. Class and gender complicated notions of intellectual independence which the increasing professionalisation of men of letters allowed them to assume.[13] In *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, Deirdre David discusses these difficulties in the light of the traditional characterisation by cultural historians and sociologists of intellectuals as either "alienated from dominant beliefs and practices in a particular culture or as legitimating those beliefs and practices."[14] Such traditional views appear to ignore the ambiguities

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[10] Ibid., 61.

[11] Horne in Robert Dessaix, *Speaking Their Minds: Intellectuals and Public Culture in Australia* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1998), 218; Anne Coombs, "Conversations with Truth," *The Australian's Review of Books* July (1997): 24.

[12] Brian Head and James Walter, eds., *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, viii.

[13] For a discussion of the changes that contributed to this increasing professionalisation, see Daniel Cottom, *Social Figures: George Eliot, Social History, and Literary Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 4-5.

[14] Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 1.

present in the position of intellectual women, in that they belonged to the class that dominated nineteenth-century British and Australian culture, but were largely excluded from the networks that held political and cultural power.

In order to understand the relationship between an intellectual woman like Spence and the society she lived in, Deirdre David's application of Antonio Gramsci's categorisations of intellectuals as "organic" or "traditional" to nineteenth-century intellectual women is useful. Gramsci defined organic intellectuals as an integral part of the dominant social group: "coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, [the ascendant social group] creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields."[15] Traditional intellectuals, on the other hand, seem "to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms … [and] thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group."[16]

In trying to determine Spence's intellectual affiliations, it is important to note that she joined Adelaide's Unitarian congregation in her early thirties. This group included a number of influential and well-educated citizens whose intellectual aspirations were encouraged by a religion that reflected the rationalism of the Enlightenment. They were not necessarily politically powerful or members of the South Australian establishment, and their numbers were small, but, as Susan Magarey notes, they were "office-holders in such bodies as the Municipal Corporation of Adelaide [and] the Chamber of Commerce, organisations that contributed … to the solidity with which bourgeois hegemony was established in South Australia."[17] Spence's ties with this group, her family's affinities with

[15] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, trans. Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 5.

[16] Ibid., 7.

[17] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 81.

the early settlers and her brother, John's, success in business and political affairs suggest that she had claims to membership of the dominant class. However, making a living from writing continued to be a struggle for her and, as a woman, she had no direct political power until 1894. Her role was circumscribed by the mere fact that she was a woman; as Gillian Whitlock and Chilla Bulbeck argue of intellectual women in Australia:

> Traditional notions of women's role have … been powerful shaping factors producing particular configurations of women's intellectual work. Intellectual activity has not been an ivory tower within which women have been able to retreat from the confines and constraints of the female-feminine stereotypes.[18]

Further complicating discussions about nineteenth-century intellectual women was the widespread perception that women's capacity for intellectual activity was less than men's for a range of reasons, including their physical inferiority. George Romanes, a "naturalist" and friend of Charles Darwin, argued, for example, that women's inferior brain size and less robust physiques led to their "marked inferiority of intellectual power," displayed in "a comparative absence of originality … more especially in the higher levels of intellectual work."[19] Art critic, P.G. Hamerton, noted that women's "remarkable incapacity for independent mental labour is accompanied by an equally remarkable capacity for labour under an accepted masculine guidance," while Leslie Stephen justified female subordination on the basis that their physiological differences affected their "whole organization and … every mental and physical characteristic."[20] Conceding that women performed as well as or better than men in examinations, a specialist in nervous diseases put this down to "women's earlier intellectual maturity and their ability to think rapidly,

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[18] Whitlock and Bulbeck, "'A Small and Often Still Voice'?: Women Intellectuals in Australia", 145.

[19] George Romanes, "Mental Differences Between Men and Women" (1887), in Dale Spender, ed., *The Education Papers: Women's Quest for Equality in Britain, 1850-1912* (London: Routledge, 2001), 11.

For nineteenth-century perceptions of sexual difference, see, among others, Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914* (1995), ed. (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2002); Margaret Jackson, *The Real Facts of Life: Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality C. 1850-1940* (London/Bristol, Pa: Taylor and Francis, 1994); Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Brighton, UK: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984), 83-92.

[20] Hamerton, *The Intellectual Life*, 1891**,** quoted in David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, 17.

Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. III, 1900, quoted in David Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), 6. For further discussion of perceptions of women's inferiority in the nineteenth century, see Rubinstein, ch. 1.

store facts and reproduce them without original thought," rather than their equal intellectual capacity.[21] Similar arguments also occurred in Australia, reflected in the records of a series of Mechanics' Institute debates on the topic in Perth in 1853. A number of debaters (all men) argued that women could never be equal to or superior to men in terms of their intellect, based on their lack of both physical and mental strength.[22] The last word in the debate went to the chairman: "women never have had and never can have the same amount of Intellect and no one among us considers his wife is superior in Intellect to himself or superior in Governing powers … Women never will to the end of time give the same evidence of their superiority of Intellect or commonsense," irrespective of the amount of education they receive.[23]

Also important in understanding the relationship between an intellectual woman such as Spence and Australian colonial society were the cultural ties between Australia and Britain, as well as the strong impetus for intellectual and moral improvement in nineteenth-century Australia. In spite of the fact that by the middle of the nineteenth century many of Australia's institutions had evolved from late eighteenth-century conceptions of what the colonies would look like,[24] many settlers still thought of themselves as English and of England as the "mother-country." Of course, there were also many who had more mixed feelings about the country they had left and the one they had arrived in: Irish immigrants, for example, saw it as a society "freed from British repression."[25] The relationship between the Australian colonies and Britain was a close one in many respects – economically, politically, culturally and legally – but there was an increasing desire for a more local identity and culture, which Spence's early novels contributed to; as Lesley Ljungdahl observes, "ideas flowed from the British parent but the colonial experience stimulated

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[21] Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes*, 4.

[22] See Patricia Grimshaw, Susan Janson, and Marian Quartly, eds., *Freedom Bound I: Documents on Women in Colonial Australia* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1995), 51-4.

[23] Ibid., 55.

[24] See Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), ch.1-4.

[25] Ibid., 47.

writing of a different kind."[26] In her letter to the publishers of *Clara Morison*, for example, Spence claimed that:

> The domestic life represented in my tale is the sort of life I have led – the people are such as I have come in contact with – the politics are what I hear talked of – the letters from the diggings are like those I have seen – the opinions I give are what are floating about among Australian society – so that it may be considered a faithful transcript of life in the Colony.[27]

James Harrison articulated the tension between the old world and what was a new world to Europeans in his short-lived periodical *Australia Felix Monthly Magazine* in 1849:

> We *live…in a new* country, but *we are an old* people, every member of which is himself composed of thoughts and feelings, which are the result of national history, national institutions, and national religion. Most of us have arrived within the last ten years in this new abode [Port Phillip] and have either brought with us or inherited recollections of the past, which extend beyond our own lives, and crowd into a present picture the stored memories of a nation.[28]

This tension between the old and the new was expressed retrospectively by Spence in her autobiography: "as we grew to love South Australia, we felt that we were in an expanding society, still feeling the bond to the motherland, but eager to develop a perfect society in the land of our adoption."[29] Like Spence, many settlers were keen to identify themselves with the new utopian colony of South Australia, whose foundation rested on the idea of a population of "suitable" settlers attracted through the reinvestment of funds from the sale of land, thereby ensuring a balance of the sexes. It would also establish free institutions that possessed none of the faults of the mother country or of previous colonial systems.[30] As was the case with many utopian adventures (discussed in more detail in chapter three), these expectations were unlikely to be met, but for six years South Australia enjoyed a "unique position in the empire" because of the degree of freedom and independence given to its

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[26] Ljungdahl, "From 'A Colonist of 1839'", I:35. For a discussion of the cultural ties between Britain and Australia, see Geoffrey Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia: A Cultural History*, (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1987), ch.2. See also Head, "Introduction: Intellectuals in Australian Society".

[27] Anonymous letter to Smith, Elder and Co. 1 August 1853, submitting the manuscript of her novel *Clara Morison*. ML MSS.

[28] Quoted in George Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture: Ideas, Men and Institutions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 41. Harrison's italics.

[29] Spence, *Autobiography*, 26.

[30] For details of systematic colonisation and South Australia's settlement see Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*.

Colonisation Commission.[31] It was no wonder then that Spence regarded the nature of South Australia's founding as "our glory"; in her autobiography she wrote, "in the land laws and the immigration laws it [South Australia] struck out a new path, and sought to found a new community where the sexes should be equal and where land, labour, and capital should work harmoniously together."[32]

Nevertheless, the English influence remained strong. A Scottish visitor in the 1840s, for example, felt that "English society, manners, language and habits have been successfully transferred …."[33] Transplanting themselves in the hope of achieving their professed ideals of "civil liberty, social opportunity and equality for all religions"[34] which they felt were not achievable in England, South Australia's settlers had to find a way to reconcile the desire to mould the colony in a different image from the country of their birth with the desire to make themselves at home in an alien society. Catherine Spence managed this in a remarkably clear-sighted manner, regarding Britain with affection, while at the same time valuing much in her new environment. She described her cultural ties with Britain as "amongst my most cherished possessions," but denounced the social inequalities of England that she felt were produced by the great disparity between rich and poor and its "class and denominational tyranny."[35]

Australia was, for Spence, an opportunity to be free of many of the traditions that would have restricted her in Scotland; her class, her gender and the conventions of provincial life were of less importance in the new world, while Scotland seemed to be still largely stuck in the past when she visited in 1865. In her autobiography, she comments on the narrow-

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[31] Ibid., 169. Pike outlines on pages 169-70 what are commonly regarded as the reasons for South Australia's failure to live up to the major principles of systematic colonisation and argues that while these had substance, "the part played by the intractable individualism of the colonists was invariably overlooked."

[32] Spence, *Autobiography*, 14.

[33] Quoted in Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, 496.

[34] Ibid., 3.

[35] Catherine Helen Spence, *A Week in the Future* (Centennial Magazine, Dec 1888 to July 1889), ed. (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1987), 24.; [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "Individuality," *Register*, 24 February 1879. See bibliography for page references to Spence's newspaper articles.

mindedness and conservatism of the inhabitants of the area where she grew up, noting that the houses of the farm labourers "were still very poor and bare" and that "the wages had risen a little since 1839, but not much."[36] In many ways, Spence and her family were typical of South Australia's initial settlers, who were "ambitious middle-class townsmen with few claims to 'good society'[;] … each in his own way saw himself an apostle for progress and enlightenment …."[37] The Spences, too, were middle-class migrants, arriving only three years after the colony's first settlers. They had left Scotland because of failed investments by Spence's father, David, causing the family to be financially and socially ruined. In spite of this fall from grace, Spence regarded herself as well-born, well-descended, well-brought up and well-educated, although she defined these differently from the English middle classes of the time, seeing herself well-born, for example, because her father and mother loved each other.[38] From the vantage-point of 1909, Spence saw the opportunity to migrate as providing "opportunities for usefulness which might not have offered if I had remained in Melrose…." She was positive about the nature of the place they were migrating to: "in spite of hardships and poverty and struggle, the early colonial life was interesting, and perhaps no city of its size at the time contained as large a population of intelligent and educated people as Adelaide."[39] She had a vision of Australia, and South Australia in particular, as possessing the potential to develop into a perfect society; as Helen Thomson observes, "in Adelaide, without the dead weight of tradition, the paralysis of rigid class demarcations, and the institutional fixity of conservative thought, Spence saw possibilities for a genuinely fresh start."[40]

Despite this positive outlook about Australia, Spence observed the strong materialistic urge among Australia's European inhabitants which was one of the motivations that accompanied the desire by many such as J.D. Lang and the "cultural missionaries" of the

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[36] Spence, *Autobiography*, 33.

[37] Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, 145.

[38] Spence, *Autobiography*, 5.

[39] Ibid., 15.

[40] Thomson, "Enlightenment Woman", 237. See ch. 3 of this thesis for further discussion about Spence's utopian views of Australia.

mid-nineteenth century to establish a more local identity. The concern that Australia was a country of people excessively preoccupied with the pursuit of wealth without being balanced by an interest in moral and intellectual progress became an important element in her writing and preaching. It was a view articulated by Edward Wakefield, among others, who belonged to a middle-class English Quaker family and whose three years in Newgate Prison in the 1820s gave him "time to ponder his narrow escape from transportation." Wakefield devised many of the principles for the systematic colonisation on which South Australia was founded, and was largely responsible, according to Douglas Pike, for "removing from emigration the stigma that had turned the middling classes against it."[41] Although he never actually went to Australia, Wakefield wrote in his fictitious *Letter from Sydney* (1829):

> We are in a barbarous condition, like that of every people scattered over a territory immense in proportion to their numbers; every man is obliged to occupy himself with questions of daily bread; there is neither leisure nor reward for investigation of abstract truth; money-getting is the universal object; taste, science, morals, manners, abstract politics are subjects of little interest unless they bear on the wool question ….[42]

Wakefield is reflecting the attitudes of the "cultivated classes" who saw "the spectre of barbarization everywhere and were especially concerned about the consequences of the acquisition of wealth by the labouring classes."[43] The working classes were understandably more interested in establishing themselves financially than with more abstract pursuits. The desire for material wealth unaccompanied by any moral or cultural improvement was regarded somewhat patronisingly by middle-class reformers such as Spence. In *Clara Morison*, for example, she satirises the pleasure that a working-class woman takes in being able to afford a piano, even though the family lives in a cottage with a dirt floor and only one room, and not one member of the family knows how to play it.[44] Mrs Tubbins uses the

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[41] Pike, *Paradise of* Dissent, 75, 74. For more information on Wakefield's life and views, see Pike, 75-83.

[42] Quoted in Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*, 36.

[43] Ibid., 65.

[44] Catherine Helen Spence, *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia During the Gold Fever, a Novel* (1854), ed. Helen Thomson (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1987), 277. All future references are to this edition.

piano as a bed instead: "it holds a good many of the little ones," she says with some satisfaction.

Being geographically remote from the rapidly changing world of Victorian England did not mean that Australians were remote from its intellectual life. Geoffrey Serle notes some of the salient features of Australian cultural development in the nineteenth century, observing that "the colonists … reconstructed every possible British or old-world cultural institution," with Melbourne and Sydney existing almost as cultural replicas of British provincial cities such as Birmingham and Glasgow.[45] Serle also notes the high quality of Australian newspapers and periodicals of the time, with the Melbourne *Argus* being regarded as one of the best newspapers in the world, while Australia took nearly half of Britain's book exports.[46] Some observers such as H.M. Hyndman and Charles Dilke were impressed with the high level of reading and education of Australians, although this may have had more to do with the circles they moved in than with their overall grasp of Australian intellectual life. Nevertheless, Australia possessed a "fairly sophisticated migrant provincial culture"[47] that occasionally surprised visitors. Catherine Spence tells of her sister, Mary's, snappy reply to a visitor from England who was "astonished … at [Mary's] having read Macaulay's History: 'Why, it was only just out when I left England,' said he. 'Well, it did not take longer to come out than you did.'"[48] In Spence's case, her friendships with educated and well-off Adelaide citizens such as the Barr Smiths and Andrew Murray gave her access to books, journals and newspapers that she probably would not have been able to afford herself.[49] The South Australian Institute, the Mechanics' Institute and the Book Society which eventually merged with the Mechanics' Institute were all part of Adelaide's cultural life in the mid-nineteenth century, assisting Spence with her ongoing education, as well as

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[45] Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia: A Cultural History*, 28, 30.

[46] Ibid., 30. See also Ken Stewart, "Journalism and the World of the Writer: The Production of Australian Literature 1855-1915", in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988).

[47] Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia: A Cultural History*, 31.

[48] Spence, *Autobiography*, 20.

[49] Ibid., 20, 55. See also Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 47-49.

her later literary and public-speaking activities. Spence's ability to read French gave her access also to the fiction of French writers such as Honoré de Balzac and Alphonse Daudet. All of this provided her with the means to fashion herself as one of the few intellectual women in nineteenth-century Australia.

While intellectual women in Australia might have been rare in the 1850s, there was by no means a dearth of interesting writing and commentary in both literary and journalistic fields. Geoffrey Serle discusses some of the achievements of this period, noting in particular the contributions of John West, Marcus Clarke and Charles Harpur.[50] The 1850s also brought immense changes that led to the establishment of many of the cultural foundations of Australian intellectual life such as universities, libraries, art galleries and museums. There was, as Shirley Walker notes, "a vast increase in population, a disturbance of class and status barriers, and a movement towards cosmopolitanism and egalitarianism."[51] Perhaps, too, women writers such as Spence, Matilda Evans and Louisa Atkinson were helping to break down some of the gender barriers that had been transported from England and which operated to discourage women from entering into intellectual fields. Patricia Clarke argues, indeed, that writing for publication was an unusual occupation for women in colonial Australia and those who did so "were generally strongly individualistic"; by overcoming the obstacles in their way, "through selling their work in the commercial world they increased the prospects of independence for women."[52]

By the late nineteenth century, when the debates and activism over the Woman Question had evolved in Australia into an organised women's rights movement, the high level of intellectual and creative vigour that had occurred among British women could be seen in Australia too. The Woman Question (or questions, as Nicola Diane Thompson suggests,

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[50] Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia: A Cultural History*, ch.3.

[51] Shirley Walker, "Perceptions of Australia, 1855-1915", in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan, 161.

[52] Patricia Clarke, *Pen Portraits: Women Writers and Journalists in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 2.

because of the "complexity and multifariousness" of these debates)[53] and the movement for women's rights, as it had earlier in England, gave women something to write about, and the confidence to step into the public arena. Thus, Louisa Lawson could publish *The Republican* (1887-8) "a truculent little journal," followed by the *Dawn* (1888-1905), which specifically addressed women's issues, and was the vehicle for Lawson's "revolutionary and visionary campaign to fit women in every way for the task of making a better world."[54] Maybanke Anderson, a member of the Women's Literary Society (WLS) which engaged in vigorous "intellectual, political and economic debates" in Sydney in the late 1880s, made her first public speech in 1891 on the subject of women's suffrage and started the *Woman's Voice* in 1894.[55] This feminist journal addressed a wide range of important issues of the time including "free love, illegitimacy and inheritance, the age of consent, Theosophy, Charles Strong's Australian Church, pacificism, world federation, dress reform, refuges, equal pay, unions, better working conditions and job opportunities for women, sex education and free kindergartens."[56] Another member of the Sydney WLS and friend of Catherine Spence was Rose Scott who was heavily involved in the women's suffrage movement in the early 1890s, as well as lobbying and speaking about broader feminist concerns.[57] By this time, too, women writers such as Ada Cambridge, Rosa Praed, Tasma and Mary Gaunt were publishing novels with women as central characters, while Catherine Martin, also a friend of Spence's, was producing work that was "characterised by [a] combination of complex and interesting characters, intellectual discussions … on

[53] Nicola Diane Thompson, "Responding to the Woman Questions: Rereading Noncanonical Victorian Women Novelists", in *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.

[54] Brian Matthews, *Louisa* (Fitzroy and Ringwood, Vic: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988), 160&74. See also Olive Lawson, *The First Voice of Australian Feminism: Excerpts from Louisa Lawson's the Dawn 1888-1895* (Brookvale, NSW: Simon and Schuster, 1990); Sharyn Pearce, *Shameless Scribblers: Australian Women's Journalism 1880-1995* (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1998), ch.2.

[55] Jan Roberts and Beverley Kingston, eds., *Maybanke: A Woman's Voice* (Avalon Beach: Ruskin Rowe Press, 2001), 3&1. See also Roberts, *Maybanke Anderson: Sex, Suffrage and Social Reform*.

[56] Roberts and Kingston, eds., *Maybanke: A Woman's Voice*, 6.

[57] For details of Scott's life and work, see Allen, *Rose Scott: Vision and Revision in Feminism*.

philosophical, social and political issues, incisive and witty commentary on the life and manners of Australia, and beautiful descriptions of the landscape."[58]

During the early stages of her career, however, Spence's intellectual influences were mainly British and European, showing up particularly in her concern about women's ability to obtain financial independence. Spence's engagement with the Woman Question in her early novels centred on the plight of unemployable, single, middle-class women and the nature of marriage. This issue was taken up in several of her novels, beginning with *Clara Morison* in 1854. In this novel, the heroine, Clara, is unable to obtain work after arriving in Australia because of her limited education and the small number of acceptable employment choices open to middle-class women. She obtains a job as a domestic servant in spite of her lack of qualifications, silently suffering the ignominy of her lowered status, but at the same time she is able to find redeeming features in it. Her determination to earn a living rather than resort to the charity of her uncle in England renders her heroic, although she is saved from having to spend too long as a servant by discovering some respectable middle-class cousins living next door. The theme is repeated with more vigour and eloquence in *Mr Hogarth's Will* (1864), and features in her utopian fiction as well.[59]

Spence also addressed issues concerning women's nature and roles in her journalism, a career she engaged in with significant success after realising that novels were not going to provide her with fame and fortune. She championed the cause of married women on several fronts, broaching several of the subjects that the mid-Victorian feminists had put on the agenda in England. In a leader in the *Register* in 1878, for instance, she called for heavier punishment of those men who commit physical abuses against wives and children as Frances Power Cobbe and Lydia Becker were doing in England.[60] To those complacent citizens of South Australia who believed that their colony's legal system did not perpetrate the same kind of injustice that existed in England – "that a more equitable mode of treating

[58] Margaret Allen, "Catherine Martin: An Australian Girl", in *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Debra Adelaide (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988), 161.

[59] This aspect of Spence's fiction will be discussed in more detail in ch. 2.

[60] See Barbara Caine, *English Feminism 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 111, 27.

husbands and wives prevails in South Australia" – she points out that "unhappily records of our Police Court show the contrary to be the case."[61] In 1882, Spence discussed the removal of financial control by husbands of wives' assets through the Married Women's Property Bill then before the Legislative Council of South Australia, arguing that:

> It is time … that some of the antiquated fictions of mediaeval law should disappear, and that a married woman should be able to hold property, buy and sell that which is her own, sue for a debt or be sued in her turn, should be criminally liable in respect of any offence commited at the instigation of her husband, and competent and compellable to give evidence in Law Courts for or against him ….[62]

In this leader for the *Register*, she seems to be aware of the British law's shortcomings, which were being agitated against by British feminists in the early 1880s, when she states that "all relations between married people in England … are founded on the maxim that husband and wife are one person, and the husband is that person." Spence argues that restricting women's rights because they might abuse them was not a valid argument against granting them: "artificial restrictions increase the natural inequality. It is only freedom that educates for the right use of freedom …." This sentiment echoes the *Women's Suffrage Journal*, which had campaigned strongly for the reforms contained in the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 in Britain, and who called it "the Magna Carta for women."[63]

The matters which Spence takes up in her novels and journalism were very much among the concerns of the women's rights activists in mid-nineteenth-century England, where women such as Harriet Martineau and Anna Jameson had already been working to raise awareness of the implications of condemning middle-class women to the domestic sphere only and arguing for improved education and employment opportunities for women. Around the same time, Caroline Norton and Barbara Bodichon were publicising the problems of married women associated with coverture[64] and child custody.

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[61] [C.H. Spence], "The Recent Murder Case," *Register*, 24 June 1878.

[62] [C.H. Spence], "Married Women's Property Bill," *Register*, 31 July 1882.

[63] *Women's Suffrage Journal*, quoted Caine, *English Feminism*, 119.

[64] The rationale for coverture, the subsuming of women's legal identity by that of her husband, as described in William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* [1765-9]was as follows: "if husband and wife were 'one body' before God, they were 'one person' in the law and that person was represented by the husband." Ibid., 66.

Given that the women's rights movement in Australia did not occur until the 1880s, Spence's ideas appear more representative of the debate over the Woman Question taking place in England. There are a number of possible reasons for the later development of the women's movement in Australia. Between the 1830s and 1850s, settlers in Australia were establishing the newer colonies of Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria. Women got on with the task of establishing homes, families and gardens without apparently demanding improvements in their rights or access to employment and education. Although many women who migrated to Australia brought with them their experiences in Britain, living conditions in their new country were incomparable in many ways to their lives in England or Scotland. The effects of industrialisation and urbanisation on working-class women that caused radical changes to where British women lived and the kind of work they did, and which created pressure for changes in working conditions, were different in Australia. From the 1850s, women's role in Australian households began to change with industrialisation but, if conditions were bad, women were less likely than men, as Raelene Frances notes, to form unions in order to address the situation "because girls expected to get married and leave paid work."[65] Another difference related to the impetus for women's suffrage in England where many women were motivated to act by the Reform Act of 1832, which widened the franchise for men but omitted any voting rights for women. In South Australia, by contrast, it was not until 1856 that adult males were given the right to vote, based on property qualifications, and even then there appeared to be no discussion of women's suffrage.[66]

However, attempting to link attitudes towards the women's rights movements in colonial Australia with events in England is a complex task, as Rosalind Smith has noted, indicating "the difficulty of mapping the shape of colonial feminisms at a particular location and moment, as imported cultural debates fragment under pressure from a set of competing

[65] Raelene Frances, "Never Done but Always Done Down", in *Making a Life: A People's History of Australia since 1788*, ed. Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988), 123.

[66] For more about the movement for women's suffrage in Australia, see p. 157ff.

local concerns and interests in early colonial culture."[67] It is important, nevertheless, in assessing the intellectual influences on Spence's work to note that an organised movement for women's rights did not begin until the 1880s and 1890s in Australia,[68] providing Spence with no public support in her early efforts at highlighting the inequities of women's position.

Understanding the attitudes of women in mid-nineteenth-century Australia to the issues which Spence was raising and to the idea of women performing intellectual work is difficult, given that there were few women involved in public life at that stage. Even with the vast amount of research that has been performed by feminist historians and literary scholars, we have limited access to the views of working-class women, although the writing of some (mostly middle-class) women has been unearthed from the archives. Those who were able to find the opportunity to record their views of aspects of their lives that went beyond quotidian tasks and social arrangements allow us to arrive at only a limited understanding of the way they saw themselves in this new and vastly different land. While few of these texts challenge the idea of men as women's intellectual superiors, as Marian Quartly notes, [69] those that do challenge the *status quo* are illuminating. Menie Parkes (daughter of Sir Henry Parkes), for example, wrote at the age of eighteen: "I cannot think that all things should be held subordinate to the purpose of fitting myself for married life … ought I not rather, to fit myself to pass through the world unaided?"[70] This makes Spence's first published novel, *Clara Morison* (1854), all the more valuable for its insights into the

[67] Smith, "*Clara Morison*: The Politics of Feminine Heterotopia," 48.

[68] Farley Kelly describes the activities of individuals such as Mary Colclough and George Higinbotham, who raised aspects of the Woman Question in Melbourne in the 1870s, but notes that this was "a decade before any attempt to organise in pursuit of feminist aims." Farley Kelly, "The Woman Question in Melbourne 1880-1914" (PhD, Monash University, 1982), 1. The Eclectic Association in Melbourne also expressed interest in women's rights during the 1870s, with a number of speakers addressing issues such as the "Social Conditions of Women" and debating the "Subjection of Women," according to Kelly (19-20). For histories of the women's rights movement in Australia, see Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1999), ch.1; Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001); Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975), ed., 3rd ed. (Camberwell: Penguin, 2002), ch.11.

[69] Patricia Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1994), 103.

[70] Grimshaw, Janson, and Quartly, eds., *Freedom Bound I: Documents on Women in Colonial Australia*, 63.

thinking of an intelligent, single woman who refuses to conform to the stereotype of the ideal woman. Margaret Elliot is not the central character of the novel, but she is far more interesting to some readers than the heroine, Clara Morison, as I will discuss in chapter two and bears many resemblances to Spence herself, most particularly in her engagement with an intellectual life. While Spence was not the only writer in Australia to raise issues of concern to women during this period, it is fair to say that her interest in the character of a woman who was the intellectual equal of men was unusual.[71]

Novels were not the only route to an intellectual life for Spence, but, after some early journalistic attempts under her brother's name, they worked to gain her entry to the public sphere by being what she regarded as "the line of least resistance."[72] They might have been the line of least resistance, but they were also a powerful and increasingly-used form for raising similar issues in England which Spence no doubt drew some comfort from in the 1850s and 1860s. The fact that she was raising feminist issues in fiction at a time when there were few women in Australia being published and when there was no similar discussion about women's role and function to that taking place in England, suggests that the Woman Question and its representation in British fiction and journalism were an important influence on both her writing and her intellectual development.

The Woman Question touched on every facet of women's lives in nineteenth-century England, generating heated discussions in periodicals and newspapers and finding its way into many popular (and some not so popular) novels. As Thaïs Morgan argues, "impelled by the socio-economic changes of the Industrial Revolution, fired by the egalitarian ideals of the French Revolution, and developed in tandem with middle-class Victorian liberalism, the 'Woman Question' embraced a range of issues regarding a woman's place in the family, in religion, in education, in the professions, and regarding her status as a citizen."[73] Not only

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[71] These early women writers are discussed on p. 71-2.

[72] Spence, *Autobiography*, 56.

[73] Thaïs E. Morgan, "Victorian Sage Discourse and the Feminine: An Introduction", in *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*, ed. Thaïs E. Morgan (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 3.

did the nature of public discourse change to include this debate, but the number of women and the amount that women wrote about these issues increased; according to Barbara Caine, the Woman Question played an important role "in giving women a voice in public debate."[74] It is arguable whether or not women such as George Eliot, whose male pseudonym reflects some of the problems that women writers encountered at the time,[75] would have produced their work without the clamour surrounding the Woman Question, but it is likely that the subject-matter of their work would have been rather different or at least received differently. Would Eliot's Dorothea have suffered so much from her marriage to Casaubon if she had not felt her intellectual repression so keenly? Would Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* have had the same force and power if Aurora's struggle to become a poet and find vocational fulfilment was not resonant of the broader issue of the lack of women's opportunities for fulfilling work? These questions, although hypothetical, highlight the importance and integral nature of the discourses surrounding the Woman Question to the period and its cultural production. For Spence the impact of the Woman Question in the 1850s would have been a little different insofar as it flowed through from England via newspapers, journals and novels, with little or no public debate taking place in Australia. Yet she, like Eliot and Browning, described the effects of women's lack of independence very early in her career, reflecting the pervasiveness of the desire for changes to women's status.

Spence could be ambivalent, however, about the desire for change. At times, she was complicit in perpetuating the patriarchal ideology that determined what respectable behaviour was for women, and contributed to her own invisibility in a way that conflicted with her ambitions. She appeared to concur, for example, in the prevailing view of journalism as a "disreputable profession" for women, when she expressed the hurt she felt towards her friend, John Taylor, for advertising the fact that she was writing for the *South*

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[74] Barbara Caine, "Feminism, Journalism and Public Debate", in *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, ed. Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99.

[75] Gillian Beer discusses the possible reasons for George Eliot's use of a pseudonym, including her desire to keep her journalistic reputation intact should her novel-writing not succeed, in Gillian Beer, *George Eliot, Key Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 20-1.

Australian in the 1840s. This had resulted in her sister being mistakenly identified at a ball as "the lady who wrote for the newspapers." Spence later wrote that "I did not like it even to be supposed of myself."[76] This was in addition to the obstacles that already existed by way of the convention of anonymity and the lack of "a room of one's own." In England, despite the increasing level of debate over the Woman Question and the fact that women were becoming increasingly acceptable as newspaper and periodical contributors, they continued to operate from an ambiguous social position; they belonged to that stratum of Victorian society in which men of letters operated and yet they were apart. They were a part of the same intellectual discourses as men, but were unable to work in the same public fashion. Some of these experiences were shared by women journalists in England and Australia. Spence, for example, wrote under her brother, John's, name for the *Argus* for many years before becoming a regular writer for the *South Australian Register*. She was proud of her appointment as a regular contributor to the *Register* in 1878, exclaiming in her autobiography, "what a glorious opening for my ambition and for my literary proclivities …" but, as Susan Magarey observes, "it was possible, undoubtedly, only because her appointment did not require her presence among the men in the offices and around the press in Grenfell Street."[77] Women such as Louisa Atkinson and Spence managed to interest newspapers in serialisations, sometimes followed up by acceptance of a series of articles, but most women contributors were engaged only on a casual basis.[78] It was rare, too, for women to be given a chance to be an editor of a newspaper or periodical before the 1880s in Australia, unless they took the initiative, found funds and set up their own, as Cora Weekes did with the *Spectator* in 1858 and Caroline Dexter and Harriet Clisby did with the *Interpreter* in 1861.[79] It is therefore not surprising that women journalists working around the middle of the century in Australia were largely invisible.

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[76] Spence, *Autobiography*, 22.

[77] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 127; Spence, *Autobiography*, 55.

[78] Clarke, *Pen Portraits: Women Writers and Journalists in Nineteenth-Century Australia*, 4.

[79] Ibid., 65, 75.

Both women and men were influenced by the Victorian ideology of separate spheres which insisted that men and women occupy arbitrarily-defined public and private domains respectively and exclusively. Thus, even as they crossed the boundaries that separated their domestic lives from the outside world, women were still, to a great extent, captured by the ideal of the "angel in the house" which meant remaining self-sacrificing and subservient to men. Evidence that they were still "respectable" women needed to be produced, either through their published views or in their private lives. Even Harriet Martineau who received considerable recognition in her lifetime for her contribution to British intellectual life could not escape the social pressure to be faithful to the image of the "womanly" woman. While politicians deferred to Martineau's ability to simplify complex ideas about political economy and solicited pamphlets and articles from her to promote particular causes, she was, as Dale Spender observes, "still required to prove her dexterity with a needle …" by her mother and aunt.[80] However, there was such an increase in the nineteenth century in the number of women who were able and willing to contribute to public debate on the issue of women's rights, as well as many other matters of public interest, that the omnipotent nature of the so-called dominant ideology can be questioned. While the ideology might have been powerful, the reality of women's lives seems to have been capable of overcoming it; as Judith Johnston observes, "the 'separate spheres' philosophy, like the philosophy constructed around the narrow concept 'Man of Letters,' was more a perverted ideal than a reality, and … the lives of Victorian men and women were not as separate as history and custom would have us believe."[81]

Another obstacle to women following an intellectual path was the ideological emphasis on women's education taking the form of "womanly" accomplishments, received via an education described by George Eliot's Dorothea as "girlish instruction comparable to the nibblings and judgments of a discursive mouse."[82] For those women who chose to move into intellectual fields seen as the purview of men, there could be considerable censure.

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[80] Dale Spender, *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them: From Aphra Behn to Adrienne Rich* (London: Routledge, 1983), 127.

[81] Judith Johnston, *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 17.

[82] George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871-2), ed. (London: Chancellor Press, 1994), book 1, ch. 3.

They could be labelled "bluestockings," an eighteenth-century term for intellectual women that became a term of abuse in the nineteenth century, carrying, as Marjorie Theobald notes, "powerful psychological sanctions against the wrong use of woman's intellect."[83] Medical science provided another means of hindering women's participation in intellectual life, with Dr Henry Maudsley expressing his doubts about

> whether women can scorn delights, and live laborious days of intellectual exercise and production, without injury to their functions as the conceivers, mothers, and nurses of children. For it would be an ill thing, if it should so happen, that we got the advantages of a quantity of female intellectual work at the price of a puny, enfeebled, and sickly race….[84]

In Australia, the same ideology was at work in relation to attitudes to women's intellectual capacities, according to Theobald, who uses a letter to the *Argus* in 1872 from Charles Perry, Anglican Bishop of Melbourne and a foundation member of the University of Melbourne Council, to demonstrate "the deeply held beliefs about the place of women in society …."[85] Perry argued against women's admission to the University of Melbourne on the basis that woman's "excellency, physical and intellectual is of a different character from that of Man; and for her to imitate him in dress, manners, sports, studies or professional employments would be to degrade herself."[86] The "natural order" of society involved women as wives and mothers, with single women to be regarded as "exceptional and unnatural." Fortunately, "the instinct of woman makes her desire the married state, and reason and revelation both teach us that she was designed for it."[87]

Nevertheless, there were women who attempted to educate themselves according to different criteria than those prescribed by such individuals as Perry, who argued that women

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[83] Marjorie Theobald, *Knowing Women: Origins of Women's Education in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21. For a detailed discussion of "bluestockings" in eighteenth century England, see Elizabeth A. Fay, *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 152-60.

[84] Dr Henry Maudsley, "Sex and Mind in Education" (1874), in Janet Horowitz Murray, *Strong-Minded Women and Other Lost Voices from Nineteenth Century Britain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 221.

[85] Theobald, *Knowing Women*, 10.

[86] Charles Perry, Letter to the *Argus*, 21 June 1872, quoted in Theobald, *Knowing Women*, 11.

[87] Ibid.

should not concern themselves with "critical scholarship or philosophical speculation, or [with] the higher branches of pure or mixed mathematics, or political or professional science."[88] George Eliot, for example, set herself a schedule of rigorous study which she attempted to fit in with her housekeeping duties. In a demonstration of the insecurity felt by even this most intelligent of women, she worried about the lack of structure and cohesion in her reading, comparing her mind, in one of her typical metaphors, to a collection of fragments of nature:

> My mind presents just such an assemblage of disjointed specimens of history, ancient and modern, scraps of poetry picked up from Shakspeare [sic], Cowper, Wordsworth and Milton, newspaper topics, morsels of Addison and Bacon, Latin verbs, geometry entomology and chemistry, reviews and metaphysics, all arrested and petrified and smothered by the fast thickening every day accession of actual events, relative anxieties, and household cares and vexations.[89]

Spence's early education was a mixture of traditional womanly "accomplishments" such as needlework and French, and reading "history, biography, adventures, description, and story books."[90] She held her childhood teacher in high regard, seeing her as "a New Woman without knowing it," while she considered herself well-educated. Counting on continuing her education at an advanced school for girls in Edinburgh, she was disappointed when her father's financial losses meant this would not be possible. For the rest of her life, she engaged in self-education that covered an immense range of subjects, and promoted many improvements in the South Australian education system, including the reform of middle-class education for girls and the establishment of an Advanced School for Girls.[91]

While Spence and Eliot tried to augment their education through private (and manly) study, the late eighteenth-century arguments of Mary Wollstonecraft against women's lack of education, their blind obedience to men and the sexual double standard, were being taken up by new generations of feminist thinkers. The almost unnoticed claims of the utopian

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[88] Ibid. For nineteenth-century views on the education of women in England, see Spender, ed., *The Education Papers*.

[89] Letter to Maria Lewis, 4 September 1839, quoted in Kathryn Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), 49.

[90] Spence, *Autobiography*, 12.

[91] For details of Spence's work in education, see Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, ch.5.

socialists and women's abolitionist organisations for women's suffrage in the early nineteenth century provided an ideological basis for the growth of the women's rights movement, which was accompanied by an increasing level of debate around the Woman Question. By the middle of the nineteenth century, it was prominent in English public discourse, with issues relating to women's economic independence, education and suffrage, legal and social reforms concerning women's position in marriage, and the moral double standard being debated by feminists such as Harriet Martineau, Barbara Bodichon, Frances Power Cobbe, Josephine Butler and John Stuart Mill.[92] Groups of women had begun to organise to address some of these matters, forming a loose association that became the foundation of the women's movement.

Compared to Mary Wollstonecraft, and such radicals as the Unitarian William Fox and the Owenites, William Thompson and Anna Wheeler, the mid-Victorian women's movement was more conservative in terms of its sexual politics, with middle-class values defining the solutions they proposed. This is the case, too, for Spence, some of whose writing about women seems conservative, particularly when compared with the vehemence in the work on women's rights by Harriet Martineau and Anna Jameson.[93] Attempting to calm the fears of those who viewed increased women's rights as leading to a reduction in "the beauty and the happiness of life," Spence argues that Australians will be unable to "escape the influence of the great wave" whose effects will in the end be positive and that "wider knowledge, and larger experience will make women not less but more pleasant in their domestic relations, as well as call forth fuller confidence and more faithful love from their husbands, their brother, and their sons."[94] The acceptability of her ideas about women, at least to some of her contemporaries, is indicated by Henry Gyles Turner's critique of Spence's pamphlet, "Some Social Aspects of South Australian Life," in the *Melbourne Review*, a journal not known for its radical tendencies. Turner praises her for the fact that

[92] See Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism:A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), part 1; Caine, *English Feminism*, ch.3. for discussions of mid-Victorian feminism.

[93] See David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, ch.2; Johnston, *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters*, ch. 8.

"she does not wail, Cassandra like, over the future of her sex, but draws clear inferences of its enhanced value and exalted status, from a radical alteration in the aims and forms of female education …." He recommends that "Husbands and Wives" in particular "should be reprinted as a handbill and sown broadcast [because] it is so full of truthful and happy suggestions, that on whatever ground it falls it must 'bear grain …'"[95]

The motivations behind such apparent conservatism in the thinking of mid-Victorian feminists, including Spence, are difficult to ascertain, although some suggestions can be made. The need to maintain respectability was particularly powerful among the Victorian middle class, so that the attempt to gain support from the mainstream may have led some to appear more conservative than they really were; antagonising potential supporters through the expression of radical views would have left them marginalised and weak.[96] The belief in sexual differences between men and women contributed to the perpetuation of the myth of women's moral superiority over men, which could be an important tool in the absence of any real power. It was also possible that these women, as Abby Kleinbaum suggests, emphasised their "decorum and rationality" to overcome the association of woman and nature that had grown up with the Romantic movement, and which helped to keep women in an inferior position: nature "was a condition to be overcome and controlled - the very antithesis of civilization."[97]

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[94] [C.H. Spence], "Husbands and Wives," *Observer Miscellany*, 30 November 1878, repr. Thomson, *Catherine Helen Spence*, 551.

[95] Henry Gyles Turner, "Review of 'Some Social Aspects of South Australian Life'," *Melbourne Review* 4 (1879): 111. Spence's feminism will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

[96] The case of Elizabeth Wolstenholme is a good example of the pressure that could be brought to bear on those who were thought to be too radical. Wolstenholme, an activist for the end of coverture and other inequities in marriage from the 1860s, was pushed by fellow feminists to marry Ben Elmy with whom she had had a free union and to whom she had become pregnant. Her commitment to the principles of free love and an "uncompromising approach to the sexual politics of women's emancipation" had brought her up against the more moderate women (201). With the threat of unemployment and social ostracism hanging over her, she and Elmy married in 1874. See Sandra Stanley Holton, "Free Love and Victorian Feminism: The Divers Matrimonials of Elizabeth Wolstenholme and Ben Elmy," *Victorian Studies* 37, no. 2 (1994).

[97] Abby Kleinbaum, *The War against the Amazons* (New York: New Press, 1983), 169. For a detailed discussion of the origins and historical development of the association of women and nature, see Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," *History Workshop Journal* 20 (1985).

Whatever the motivations that lay behind the sexual politics of individuals, it is apparent that the women's movement in Britain was in no way monolithic and the range of views expressed by its supporters was considerably varied. They included liberal activists concerned with reforming women's property laws and increasing their employment opportunities, such as Millicent Garrett Fawcett and John Stuart Mill, who at the same time wanted to ensure that women retained their "womanliness." Another liberal, Josephine Butler, wanted to transform society through the elimination of the sexual double standard. She advocated social purity, that is, the same standards of sexual purity for men as those demanded of women.[98] More problematic as a feminist was Harriet Martineau, who made the case powerfully for women's economic independence but did so under a male pseudonym, as Barbara Caine observes, "making the feminist case while not allowing herself … to be included within the feminist campaign."[99] In her assessment of Mary Wollstonecraft in her autobiography, Martineau condemns the other woman's feminism as being based too much on passion and her personal unhappiness; she praises the kind of woman who would be "rational and dispassionate" in the service of women's cause, "just as if she were a man."[100]

Catherine Spence's writing on the subject of women could be conservative but it was unlikely that Harriet Martineau would have disapproved. "Rational and dispassionate" describes Spence's work on a whole range of matters of interest to a middle-class which was, in both England and Australia, "growing in economic and social power as well as in numbers … [and] wanted entertainment, diversion, information, social instruction, moral guidance and spiritual reassurance"[101] Higher levels of literacy associated with improved access to education contributed to the popularity of "higher" journalism and the "new" journalism in England which made their way to Australia as well. The result was a vastly

[98] For a discussion of the relationship between liberalism and feminism in nineteenth-century England, see Caine, *English Feminism*, 102-15.

[99] Ibid., 79.

[100] David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, 47.

[101] Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, 28.

increased reading public and a call for writers who could satisfy their requirements, people such as Thomas Babington Macaulay whose essays were, according to John Morley:

> as good as a library: they make an incomparable manual and vademecum for a busy uneducated man, who has curiosity and enlightenment enough to wish to know a little about the great lives and great thoughts, the shining words and many-coloured complexities of action, that have marked the journey of man through the ages.[102]

Women such as Catherine Spence took advantage of these changes and Spence's literary essays and reviews, such as those on George Eliot and other writers, offer just this type of reading with her audience largely consisting of the growing number of educated, middle-class citizens of colonial Adelaide and Melbourne.

Spence's reading and writing reflect her broad interests and the extent of her interventions in a wide range of public discourse. She provided regular summaries of British periodicals to her South Australian readers with comments on the value or otherwise of the articles,[103] as well as explaining how other countries had implemented ideas that she thought could be useful in Australia, such as savings systems and policies related to the relief of poverty. She occasionally used her position to address issues of women's rights, and was well-aware of both contemporary and historical women's writing including Mary Astell's *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696) and Mary Wollstonecraft's "grand vindication of the rights of the sex."[104] She was acquainted with the work of many nineteenth-century women writers and activists, having reviewed the writing of Eliot, Mitford, Martineau, George Sand and other literary women, and refers frequently in her autobiography to Margaret Oliphant, comparing her own life with Oliphant's on many points.[105] On her trip to England in 1865-6, she met Cobbe, Bodichon and Eliot, all of whom she admired.

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[102] John Morley, "Macaulay," *Critical Miscellanies, 1* (1886), quoted in Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 104-5. The Oxford Dictionary defines a "vade-mecum" as "a handbook or other thing carried constantly about the person."

[103] See Barbara Wall's *Compiler's Notes: Series* for the reasons for attribution to Spence, Wall, *Catherine Helen Spence*.

[104] Spence, *Autobiography*, 41. Spence quotes both writers in "Woman's Suffrage and Effective Voting," A paper read at a drawing-room meeting at Glenelg, *The Voice*, 9 December 1892.

[105] Ibid., 15.

Her intellectual bent was also of a most practical kind; she thought deeply and carefully and often adopted enthusiastically those ideas she felt were useful, modifying and explaining them as her own knowledge and experience increased. One of her main projects during her lifetime was the implementation of the proportional representation electoral system in South Australia. After enthusiastically taking up the plan devised by Thomas Hare and endorsed by John Stuart Mill, she could see that Hare's original design would not work effectively in South Australia and proposed her own modifications. She produced a pamphlet that incorporated these changes, *A Plea for Pure Democracy: Mr Hare's reform bill applied to South Australia*, in 1861; it was well-received by Hare himself, as well as by Mill and Rowland Hill, but it "did not set the Torrens on fire."[106]

Some writers have assessed Spence's occasional practice of adopting and adapting others' ideas as reflecting a lack of originality on her part,[107] but in making complex and esoteric ideas accessible to the literate public, she was performing a service similar to that performed by Harriet Martineau earlier in the nineteenth century. What Dale Spender observes of Martineau in writing about political economy in terms that were accessible to contemporary readers could be said of Spence: in "trying to make much of this new and powerful knowledge generated by men, … to invest it with her own 'original' refinement, and to make it available to all who could read … [she did] not play the 'mystifying' game … instead insist[ing] on the *knowledgeability* of all human beings …."[108] Spence wanted ideas to "get into the air" rather than remaining in "great books" or waiting until they were "in a complete form with every step of the process logically reasoned out," approvingly citing John Stuart Mill's understanding of his function as the learning of "all the truths which had been discovered by others, and [the consideration of] what amount of truth underlay even errors, and then to give the result of this patient work to the world in a readable form."[109] In reading Spence's journalism, it becomes apparent that making

[106] Ibid., 24.

[107] See Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women;* Ramsland, "Catherine Helen Spence: Writer, Public Speaker and Social and Political Reformer, 1825-1910," 37.

[108] Spender, *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them: From Aphra Behn to Adrienne Rich*, 128.

[109] [C.H. Spence], "Unacknowledged Borrowing," *Register Supplement*, 6 January 1881.

knowledge accessible was one of her objectives in writing for newspapers; she regarded them as an educational vehicle, albeit one that "*partly leads* and *partly follows* public opinion," whose writers "should be a good deal wiser than most of their readers [because] if they are a very great deal wiser people cannot follow them."[110] She saw them, as Susan Magarey observes, as "the principal means available … of expressing public opinion, commenting on public affairs, and urging new measures upon the community."[111] Whether or not she insisted on the "knowledgeability of all human beings" is debatable, but there is no doubt about her commitment to the idea of improving society generally, and the working class in particular, through education.

Apart from political issues such as proportional representation, she also addressed social problems such as poverty by writing about the shortcomings of contemporary forms of philanthropy and charity. In keeping with her liberal inclinations towards a limited role for governments in the everyday lives of people, and individuals' acceptance of responsibility for their lives, she recommended that Australian colonies imitate certain aspects of the French system of poor relief. In an article entitled "Organised Charity" in the *South Australian Register*, she criticises the English poor law for its creation of an army of dependents, describing the French method of *Assistance Publique* as a "triumph of French patriotism and common sense."[112] The French system appealed to her desire to alleviate genuine poverty, her dislike of waste and her feeling that charity had a tendency to "encourag[e] undue reliance on it." She argued that South Australia was the colony most able to benefit from bringing together the various sources of charitable funds in a cooperative manner because its own poor relief was already well-organised and cost-effective. In a later article she praises the system of poor relief in the German town of Elberfeld for its extension to unemployed families, in contrast to the lack of generosity in terms of reach and quantity of rations in South Australia. As was usually the case with any criticism of Australia by Spence, she ends on a positive note, appealing to the "civic

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[110] Catherine Helen Spence, *The Laws We Live Under* (Adelaide: Under the direction of the Hon. the Minister of Education of South Australia, 1880), 113,11.

[111] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 138.

[112] [C.H. Spence], "Methods of Poor Relief. II. Organized Charity," *Register*, 18 April 1879.

conscience of Adelaide" for united action for the benefit of the poor, arguing that "no better place than Adelaide could be found for the experiment."[113]

Spence was able to articulate her desire for social reform in fiction as well as non-fiction. The ideas of Scottish social theorist, Jane Clapperton, detailed in her 1885 book, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness*, were transformed by Spence into a fictional scenario and serialised as *A Week in the Future* (1888-9), taking advantage of the public's newly awakened interest in utopian fiction.[114] The theories that Clapperton propounded were a synthesis of the ideas of other nineteenth-century thinkers such as Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin and George Eliot, and were therefore not new or revolutionary, but they appealed to Spence. She understood and sympathised with the central thrust of Clapperton's book - that science should not merely contribute to abstract knowledge or increased productivity but "should now apply itself strenuously to the evolution of human happiness."[115] While *A Week in the Future* seeks to illustrate Clapperton's theories in an accessible and understandable way, it also incorporates many of the ideas for social reform that Spence had developed over years of thought and activism. Education, for example, is discussed by Clapperton but with no practical suggestions for improvement: she recommends only:

> a change of system … by which children will have a calm and tranquil youth, free from all artificial excitement, a constant supervision, authority that will guide them without coercion, training in the emotional and moral departments of education as well as the mental ….[116]

Spence fleshes out these bare bones, describing each level of education - the nurseries which operate as part of the Associated Homes, the State schools, the Continuation schools and universities - and how the system is directed towards holistic learning. She also eliminates in her utopian education system, as Susan Magarey notes, "the intractable

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[113] C.H. Spence, "A Study of Poverty: The Problem of the Poor," II, *Register*, 24 April 1906.

[114] The utopian nature of *A Week in the Future* is discussed in chapters 3 and 5.

[115] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, Review of *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness*, *Register*, 28 June 1887.

[116] Jane Hume Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness* (London: Kegan Paul, 1885), 363.

hierarchies of class, gender and authority."[117] Children in *A Week in the Future* are taught tolerance of difference and respect for the rights of all, with "the most perfect equality" existing between classes and sexes in the schoolroom as in society.[118] Teachers' authority is relied on as a last resort, with students electing monitors and prefects to maintain order.

Like Harriet Martineau who acted as instructor and social critic to her readers, Spence's interests extended to economic matters. Well before the single taxation theories of American political economist Henry George became popular in Australia, Spence indicated her support for his ideas. In an essay in the *Victorian Review* and a review article in the *Register* in 1881, she presents George's arguments and relates them to the Australian colonies, concluding that this change in the taxation system had the potential for "a greater amount of benefit than from any other reform in the world."[119] While this was a useful representation of George's ideas, it was also an example of how she could sometimes make rather grand claims about the extent of her influence. In her autobiography, she wrote that she opened in the "three most important Australian colonies the question of the taxation of land values," an unlikely event as Susan Magarey argues, based on the fact that the single tax movement in South Australia did not begin until after George's tour of Australia in 1890.[120] Nonetheless, she consistently tried to offer her readers views on political economy that were outside the mainstream. She wrote articles on such subjects as controlling capital for the benefit of all, the advantages of cooperation over competition, and raising objections to the amount of money wasted on fashionable clothes when there were people in need; these will be discussed in more detail in chapters four and five.

A common style emerges in her writing on such potentially controversial subjects - that of a calm magisterial voice raised quietly, but firmly, above vested interests. Spence promotes changes associated with taxation, women's rights and relief of poverty by pointing out the

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[117] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 105.

[118] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 76.

[119] Catherine Helen Spence, "A Californian Political Economist," *Victorian Review* 4, no. 20 (1881): 146.

[120] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 133; Spence, *Autobiography*, 66.

drawbacks of the current systems, what the new ideas are, as well as their defects, and argues the long-term benefits of implementation, albeit with some modifications. It is possible to see her caution as conservatism but, equally, the fact that she generally promotes change rather than trying to conserve the *status quo* places her in the camp of progressives and reformers. Writing for mainstream newspapers and periodicals would have influenced her style to a great extent as well - she was no Louisa Lawson producing fiery articles exhorting women to go on strike as Lawson did in her *Dawn* magazine. Spence wanted to retain her position as a regular contributor to the *Register* in order to earn an income; writing for feminist journals, which in any case did not come into existence until the late 1880s, would have made her position more precarious financially and perhaps alienated her from her mainstream audience. Also, she wrote on broader issues than feminism, which radical journals like the *Tocsin* and the *Worker* in the 1890s might have accommodated, but she was no socialist or radical in the sense that William Lane, for example, was. Definitely middle-class in most of her views, she presented arguments for change in language that did not scare her fellow middle-class citizens.

In trying to understand the significance and meaning of Spence's journalistic language, there are different ways of viewing it. Xavière Gauthier argues that if women remain silent, they put themselves "outside the historical process [b]ut, if they begin to speak and write *as men do*, they will enter history subdued and alienated; it is a history that, logically speaking, their speech should disrupt."[121] On the other hand, Thaïs Morgan, writing about the Victorian female sage, suggests that if the female sage is "aware of the opposition between devalued 'feminine' language and authoritative 'masculine' language in nineteenth-century culture, the act of writing signifies an intentionally revolutionary gesture."[122] When we recall Spence's desire to discipline her mind to "manly virtues, manly strength and manly studies," it seems likely that she is affirming her belief in the notion of separate spheres at

[121] Xavière Gauthier, "Is There Such a Thing as Women's Writing?" in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 162-3. The italics are Gauthier's.

[122] Morgan, "Victorian Sage Discourse and the Feminine: An Introduction", 6.

the same time as she is rejecting it as not applicable to her - or, indeed, to any woman who wishes to "live without leaning on anyone."

Acknowledging the existence of a masculine or public sphere and then working within it by writing about topics that were mostly written about by men and written in a particular style, does not subdue Spence's voice. On the contrary, she empowers herself to speak loudly on issues such as domestic violence, without becoming alienated from her middle-class audience or from history. Such actions locate her within the tradition of women such as Martineau, Jameson and Cobbe who argued for women's rights but at the same time accepted many of the guidelines laid down by the patriarchal society in which they lived. Despite apparently conforming to the "rules" of patriarchy, Spence challenges the binary opposition of masculine and feminine, as well as the notion of separate spheres, just as Harriet Martineau rejected the ideology of the feminine sphere in language, as well as in intellectual and social space.[123] Like Martineau and Eliot, Spence appropriates public, journalistic (or "masculine") language for her own use, while occupying an important position in her country's intellectual life. But while Martineau and Spence are modest about publicly claiming their place at the same time that they speak out about women's issues, George Eliot, whose high profile provided her with a unique position from which to discuss women's rights, was "reluctant to be quoted on anything to do with women."[124] Of course, Eliot's desire and ability to speak out were probably affected by her compromised social status as Lewes's unmarried partner but as she herself wrote, "the bent of [her] mind was conservative," convinced as she was that "political change which ran ahead of social and psychological development was at best useless and at worst dangerous."[125]

Spence's use of the "masculine" language of journalism also assisted her attempts to act as critic and instructor in social and political matters as well as in areas of moral values and behaviour. Like many nineteenth-century intellectual figures, she used her public position to

[123] Ibid., 9.

[124] Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 370.

[125] Ibid., 369.

encourage her readers to contribute to the improvement of society, trying to persuade them to live up to a high standard of ethical behaviour. Using logic and rational argument to highlight what she saw as the irrational attitudes and injustices of the class system as it operated in Australia and Britain, for example, she encouraged the middle classes to view domestic servants as making a valuable contribution to society, rather than demeaning their work or their characters. No doubt her stand on this was influenced by the shortage of women entering domestic service, creating the so-called "servant problem" of the period, but she also sounds a little like William Morris in his dream of arcadian working bliss, *News from Nowhere* (1890). In Morris's utopia, domestic tasks are accorded considerable respect, so that the elderly, male, utopian guide admonishes the traveller from the nineteenth century for seeing housekeeping as an "unimportant occupation," laughing at his archaic ideas: "I am … laughing … at that silly nineteenth-century fashion, current amongst rich so-called cultivated people, of ignoring all the steps by which their daily dinner was reached, as matters too low for their intelligence."[126] In suggesting that "people may come to see that driving a pen over creamlaid notepaper and writing a nice little note is no more dignified than driving a smoothing iron over linens and laces …," Spence points out that manual labour can possess its own dignity when done well. Servants are not necessarily less intelligent than middle-class, educated women because "cooking a dinner so as to get the best meal for a family with the least waste is as intelligent a thing as defining the chemical constituents of meat, bread, and other eatables …." By regarding such tasks as inferior, "they will be done in an inferior manner"; it is only by upholding the dignity of the work that the workers gain self-respect."[127]

The use of self-interest to persuade people to ethical behaviour - in this case, giving servants respect for their work means that they will be less likely to perform those tasks in an inferior manner - is a form of rhetoric not unusual in Spence's writing and is consistent with the utilitarian outlook of her utopian novella, *A Week in the Future*. Domestic work in

[126] William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890), in *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin, 1998), 94.

[127] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "Some Social Aspects of Early Colonial Life," *Register*, 26 October 1878, repr. Thomson, *Catherine Helen Spence*, 529, 530.

the future is contracted out to men and women who are assisted by every possible labour-saving device because "the human instrument is more costly than it ever was" (35). The "servants," who are treated as equals and whose work is respected by all, are likely to earn as much as other inhabitants of the associated homes, with the overall cost being cheaper to each family. The intelligent pursuit of happiness by all within that future society results in the lives of all being improved: the cruelty, degradation and demoralisation caused by the difficulty of obtaining divorce has been eliminated by "making the marriage tie reasonably elastic," for example, and young people are permitted to marry early to avoid the destructive results "to virtue, to health and to happiness" that would otherwise occur.[128] Encroaching on the rights of others leads to not just those individuals who suffer making clear their feelings, but also involves other members of society giving their support to those who are hurt – in other words, Bentham's idea of moral sanction. Rather than selfishness being the result of the pursuit of happiness, individuals are reluctant to injure other members of society because it will actually cause them pain.[129]

Not only did Spence advocate the concept of utilitarianism as elaborated by nineteenth-century intellectual figures such as John Stuart Mill, but she also supported the idea of individual freedom, as well as the benefits of individualism. This is evidenced in a number of articles over a long period of time.[130] Her views on such matters were tempered, however, by her support for cooperation over competition and the overall good of the community versus the good of the individual, discussed in more detail in chapter five.[131] She did not hesitate to criticise the American form of competition in which "each man … feels that if he does not press forward ahead of his fellows he is likely to be driven back and

[128] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 94, 96, 89.

[129] Ibid., 68-9. See also John Stuart Mill, "Bentham" (1838), in *Utilitarianism*, ed. Mary Warnock (Glasgow: Collins, 1979).

[130] See Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 137.**;** A Colonist of 1839, "Individuality," *Register*, 24 February 1879; [C.H. Spence], "Work and Worry," *Observer Miscellany*, 28 August 1880; A Colonist of 1839, "General Culture and Individual Genius, *Register*, 3 March 1879.

[131] Spence's attitudes to individual versus public good are discussed in Gregory Melleuish, "Distributivism: The Australian Political Ideal?," *Journal of Australian Studies* (1999). See also C.H.S., "The Modern Spirit," *Australasian*, 28 June 1879; A Colonist of 1839, "Our Future Masters," *Register*, 21 January 1890.

trampled on," in which "both the greed and the fear [are]unsocial and demoralizing …."[132] Cooperation was a far better model for communities to follow, as long as it was voluntary, with individuals who put aside personal jealousies to fight for the rights of others more likely to contribute towards "a real and universal sympathetic jealousy," ultimately leading to improvements in human happiness.[133] In this same article, Spence makes a plea for the spirit of Clapperton's book to be followed:

> Let the truest and the best be only filled with the same spirit, and to give to the world their best thoughts and add to these their most earnest efforts, and we may hope that the evolution of happiness may be compassed.

Spence's desire for "the truest and the best" to participate in this social evolution confirms her endorsement of the power of individualism, but it also indicates the ways in which she saw individuals lifting their sights higher. These are the readers whom she calls on to improve their behaviour, using arguments that appeal to their higher nature but at the same time not denying the power of self-interest: "The world would not hold together without a great deal of honesty, of generosity, and disinterested service being mixed up with that self-interest which rightly enough is the main motive power of life." She is never pessimistic, arguing that the era in which she was writing left much room for hope: never before had there been "so much desire for individual and social regeneration …." [134]

Like John Stuart Mill whose "reputation as the embattled champion of individuality … helped to obscure … the extent [of his] fierce antipathy to selfishness, and a correspondingly intense commitment to altruism," Spence defended individualism at the same time as she decried selfishness.[135] This concern with egoism and altruism was debated by some of the most important moralists of the age, including not just Mill, but Herbert Spencer and George Eliot. It was a subject close to the hearts of many, indicated by the way in which Eliot was revered, as Stephan Collini notes, by "so many intellectuals of this

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[132] Catherine Helen Spence, "An Australian's Impressions of America," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 89 (1894): 248.

[133] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness," *Register*, 28 June 1887.

[134] Both quotations from [C.H. Spence], "Trollope's Thackeray," *Register*, 10 October 1879.

[135] Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, 68.

generation … as the most effective moral teacher of the age because of the unrivalled effectiveness with which her novels educated the feelings against the self-destructive perils of selfishness ….”[136] For Spence, the appeal of George Eliot lay in her overriding concern with articulating a set of moral values that people could live by, making her the epitome of writers in Spence’s eyes. While the two women only met once, Spence expressed her admiration of and respect for “this keen-sighted woman of genius” in two essays in the *Melbourne Review*, and was explicit about Eliot’s influence: she wrote that “no writer of fiction has called forth such wide sympathies, or has influenced my aims and my conduct as George Eliot has done.”[137] In a review of an article by Fredric Myers on Eliot in *The Century*, Spence directs the reader to his recognition of “the greatness of [Eliot’s] achievement in the expansion of the sense of human fellowship into an impulse strong enough to compel us to live for others, even though it be beneath the oncoming shadow of an endless night.”[138] Eliot’s letter to Spence following their unfortunate meeting in 1865 and G.H. Lewes’s reading of Spence’s 1876 essay indicate Eliot’s appreciation of Spence’s insights into her writing, especially surprising considering her aversion to critical comment. After apologising for her poor reception of Spence during her visit to the Priory, Eliot writes: “[Lewes] told me of some passages in it which gratified me by that comprehension of my meaning - that laying of the finger on the right spot - which is more precious than praise….”[139]

Moral concerns such as those which Eliot expresses in her writing often appear as a part of sage discourse, an important genre in nineteenth-century literature, and one which Spence

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[136] Ibid., 80.

[137] Catherine Helen Spence, "George Eliot," *Melbourne Review* 1 (1876): 162, 46.

[138] [C.H. Spence], “The December Reviews,” [Second Notice], *Register*, 25 February, 1882.

[139] Quoted in Spence, *Autobiography*, 43. Spence describes her visit to Eliot in her autobiography: following the presentation to Eliot of a letter of introduction to Lewes written by William Smith Williams, the literary manager for Smith, Elder and Company, “[Eliot] asked me if I had any business relating to the article which Mr. Williams had mentioned, and I had to confess that I had none. For once I felt myself at fault. I did not get on with George Eliot. She said she was not well, and she did not look well … no subject that I started seemed to fall in with her ideas, and she started none in which I could follow her lead pleasantly. It was a short interview, and it was a failure. I felt I had been looked on as an inquisitive Australian desiring an interview upon any pretext” (42).

also seems to enjoy. It is a genre which "held a commanding position within the Victorian hierarchy of genres," according to George Landow, who defines it as "a form of postromantic nonfiction prose characterized by a congeries of techniques borrowed … from Old Testament prophecy, particularly as it was understood in the nineteenth century."[140] Although most nineteenth-century sage discourse emanated from men, Landow cites Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra* as an example of female sage writing based on its use of similar techniques. The women who attempted to participate in this form of discourse, women such as George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, were, like Spence, trying to take advantage of the power that it offered but they faced what Morgan refers to as the "inherent contradiction in being a woman speaker (who speaks to men)."[141] While they could appropriate some of the power that male sages held by writing about sexual politics and theology, for example, they did it by publicly risking their femininity and their respectability. To counter the potential damage, they often disparaged women whom they saw as being too emotional (as Harriet Martineau did of Mary Wollstonecraft) or who lacked their own intellectual depth (as George Eliot did when she wrote about "silly novels by lady novelists").[142] Catherine Spence was no different in this respect from her peers in England. She claimed that she had retained her femininity in spite of her constant presence in the public sphere, and disliked women who argued too vehemently for women's rights. At the same time she wrote of the difficulties of women who were unable to establish financial independence or who were regarded as "bluestockings," explored the benefits of religious doubt and campaigned for a new electoral system. The fact that she was rarely criticised for raising these issues suggests there is some validity to Judith Newton's assessment of the marginal position of nineteenth-century women of letters as making them "even better placed than professional men to

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[140] Morgan, "Victorian Sage Discourse and the Feminine: An Introduction", 2.; George Landow, "Aggressive (Re)Interpretations of the Female Sage: Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra*", in *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse*, ed. Thaïs E. Morgan, 33.

[141] Morgan, "Victorian Sage Discourse and the Feminine: An Introduction", 6.

[142] See, for example, Harriet Martineau's comments about Mary Wollstonecraft, quoted in David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, 46-7. Or George Eliot's criticism of "silly novels by lady novelists" as "a composite order of feminine fatuity," Rosemary Ashton, ed., *George Eliot: Selected Critical Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 296.

enact the role of social 'crank,' to offer social analyses and critiques of the very market or social relations on which their class position to some degree hinged."[143]

However, rather than placing herself "outside society and in opposition to [her] audience" as Landow suggests that sages needed to do, Spence attempts to provide this guidance to her own readers in a much gentler, less bitter tone than Nightingale, for example, did.[144] In her instructing role, Spence aims at spiritually uplifting her readers in her essays on literature and writers, encouraging them to aspire to that combination of egoism and altruism she felt was necessary for the improvement of society. Using Eliot's novels as a kind of touchstone by which to judge all other literature, she presents a view of literature that has much in common with those men and women of letters in Victorian England who saw it acting through "the cultivation of the sympathies and imagination, the quickening of the moral sensibilities, and the enlargement of the moral vision," as John Morley puts it.[145] Eliot introduced a quality that was new to fiction, according to Spence, "a distinctly dominant ethical purpose, of permanent and universal application, quite different from the lessons drawn in religious novels of various theological schools."[146] Spence warmed to Eliot's religious humanism, recognising the sympathy that Eliot evoked through her novels as inspirational, creating a "responsive spark" in readers and generating "ideas, aspirations, conclusions, which we were before unconscious of, or very dimly conscious of, [that] leap into light before the awakening touch of a higher, yet a kindred soul."[147] Eliot's novels always reveal the consequences of immoral or base behaviour in a way that other writers should take note of, according to Spence; she disapproves of Balzac, for instance, who "delights to see his puppets act their contemptible part, and pursues them with neither

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[143] Judith Newton, "Engendering History for the Middle Class: Sex and Political Economy in the *Edinburgh Review*", in *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender*, ed. Linda M. Shires (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 2-3.

[144] Landow, "Aggressive (Re)Interpretations of the Female Sage: Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra*", 33.

[145] Quoted Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, 79.

[146] Catherine Helen Spence, "George Eliot's Life and Works," *Melbourne Review* 10, no. 39 (1885): 221.

[147] Spence, "George Eliot," 146.

poetical nor ethical justice."[148] Although she writes of Balzac as a "kindly and generous" man, she felt that he wrote powerful and widely-read works that were too pessimistic in their view of human nature and simplistic in their explanation of human motives. Yet she was able to write of Thackeray, whose "estimate of the world he lived in appears almost cruel, and the moral tone of his writings [as] on the whole depressing," that he probably possessed more of the "qualities of sympathy and generosity and self-appreciation" than Charles Dickens.[149] This assessment seems to be based on Spence's comparison of the personal and moral qualities of the two writers; Thackeray's cynicism showed itself in a literary form only, rather than in his personal life, whereas Dickens, at least as revealed in John Forster's *Life*, was self-absorbed, concerned with improving his financial situation and "very susceptible to pique."[150] She felt that it was justified for a reader to inquire into a writer's moral values in order to discover whether "a great teacher's life corresponds with his lessons, and whether his moral or personal character entitles him to their confidence."[151]

For Spence, great works require outstanding personal and moral qualities in their creators, arguing that "to write a great or even a good novel is not the easy work of an ordinary person; it demands the very highest qualities of mind and heart."[152] High personal standards did not always lead to the creation of worthy fiction, however. Thackeray's work, for example, is short on the high moral standards she expects writers to promote to readers, despite his apparently kindly disposition. On the other hand, Spence reveres Eliot's work, treating her apparent disregard of conventional morality in her personal life and her rejection of organised religion as positive characteristics. Indeed, she regards Eliot's personal and moral integrity very highly, arguing that the acceptance of religious dogma does not necessarily constitute a spiritual life; rather, "wherever a human being is led to … hold the rights of his fellow creatures as sacred as his own, spiritual life has begun."[153]

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[148] Catherine Helen Spence, "Honoré De Balzac: A Psychological Study," *Melbourne Review* 4 (1879): 350.

[149] Ibid.: 348.

[150] Ibid.

[151] [C.H. Spence], Review of Froude's *Life of Carlyle*, *Register*, 29 July 1882.

[152] [C.H. Spence], "Fiction, Fair and Foul," *Observer*, 7 August 1880.

[153] Spence, "George Eliot's Life and Works," 244.

Instead of condemning Eliot for her apparent immorality, Spence argues that her motives do not stem from "a selfish craving for personal gratification" and that Eliot's relationship with Lewes "should serve … as a plea for greater liberty of divorce than a weakening of any true marriage bond."[154]

Non-fiction prose writers of the nineteenth century were no less subject to Spence's judgmental pen. She spends a considerable portion of her review of James Froude's *Life of Carlyle* discussing Carlyle's treatment of his wife, Jane. This was partly due to family connections – Jane Welsh's father was Spence's grandfather's doctor and her mother knew Jane as a child – but also because Spence regarded Jane Welsh Carlyle as possessing "a most remarkable mind, naturally original and trained in a manner unusual to a woman."[155] She, like Dorothea Brooke during her marriage to Casaubon in Eliot's *Middlemarch*, had to act in a lesser role than the one she had looked forward to, that of intellectual companion to her husband, and Spence notes the effect this had on her and the flaws it revealed in Carlyle's nature. While she records his intellectual influence and great literary ability, his desire for the truth and his moral righteousness, as well as his concern with injustice and inhumanity, she does not hesitate to comment on his selfishness and self-martyrdom which made Jane's life a misery. Although never saying directly that Jane wasted her talents and abilities, Spence's hackles are obviously raised when she notes that all her resources "were drawn upon to procure him quiet and to see that his food was such as his wofully [sic] weak stomach could grapple with, and that the household arrangements generally were such as would spare him irritation and annoyance …." Not until after Jane's death, when Carlyle read her letters and journal did he discover "how much she had borne, how much she had done, and how much she had suffered." She ultimately damns Carlyle with faint praise after disagreeing with Froude's unwillingness to assess the work of Carlyle as truthful or illusory, arguing that "wherever we have thought, earnestness, or activity there works around these things some betterment of humanity … in the end something is done." Still, if

[154] Ibid.: 243.

[155] All quotations in this paragraph are from [C.H. Spence], Review of Froude's *Life of Carlyle*, *Register*, 29 July 1882.

one individual, albeit an exceptional one, can make a contribution to society despite his flaws, how much more could he do by improving his character? In writing about Carlyle's mixture of greatness, insensitivity and selfishness and Jane's martyrdom to the cause of his writing, Spence's critique encompasses moral and feminist issues that were significant in nineteenth-century intellectual discourse.

Spence's concentration on "the failings of character as the chief source of civic as well as private woe" was similar to the focus of many Victorian moralists.[156] Like them, too, she ventures into political and economic areas in her attempts to raise the consciousness of her fellow citizens. Her preoccupation with proportional representation was the political manifestation of her support for a kind of "managed individualism" – in fact, it was a form of elitism – which she saw as better than the current system of democracy. She argues in her pamphlet on the benefits of proportional representation that ensuring that those individuals who possessed "genius, originality and independence" were represented in parliament would mean political life would be less crowded with "third-rate men."[157] Dominance by the majority allows evil to become less apparent; with the oppressed body being smaller, wealthier and possessing considerable social advantage, "attention is drawn away from political injustice."[158] But if all people were equitably represented, "the good would be stronger than the evil" and "the wise more effectual than the foolish."[159]

Spence becomes both social critic and public moralist as she critiques the existing system of government and insists that those with the finest character should not be left out if the people are to achieve the best government. In a direct challenge to male politicians and voters after women received the right to vote in South Australia, the *Register* published a letter by Spence in which she calls on women to make a difference with their votes: "character should count for more than it has done in the past. Women do not want to be

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[156] Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, 2.

[157] Catherine Helen Spence, *A Plea for Pure Democracy. Mr Hare's Reform Bill Applied to South Australia* (Adelaide: W.C. Rigby, 1861), 6.

[158] Ibid., 20.

[159] Spence, *Autobiography*, 37.

represented by drunkards, libertines, gamblers or political adventurers." Even more important were "political consistency and integrity."[160] In an earlier article she harked back to the French Revolution to make her point about character: the failings of character in the aristocratic and clerical classes, their lack of a sense of public duty, made the French Revolution "a frightful catastrophe," rather than the "progressive movement" it might have been. It was only after these classes reneged on their responsibilities that the Democrats became "the dangerous classes" and, in spite of their violence and cruelty, they were "not more selfish – probably much less selfish" than the monarch, aristocracy and Church."[161] Selfishness appears to Spence as a much worse character flaw than violence and cruelty, reflecting what Collini sees as "an obsessive antipathy to selfishness" typical of the Victorian moralists who "looked upon altruism as the heart of all moral virtue."[162]

In extending her moralism to money matters, Spence's concern was to raise the sights of people beyond improving their material wealth. She did not object to such aspirations but she wanted human beings to aim higher. Although her novel, *Handfasted*, was not published in the nineteenth century, it provides a perspective on what Spence saw as the limitations of fulfilling material wants only. The utopian community of Columba is egalitarian and democratic; it has neither very rich nor very poor citizens. And yet it is imperfect, according to the narrator, because its people lack spirituality and a sense of humour, and it has failed to develop in areas of art, literature, architecture and music.[163] In a less utopian world, the problems caused by materialism unaccompanied by high ethical standards are even greater. Acknowledging the power that materialism possesses to civilise nations, she also notes its power to undermine public and private morality:

> The desire for property and the intense love of it which characterizes all so-called successful men has been an enormous factor in civilization … but it has been so powerful in the hands of greed and unscrupulous cleverness that it has led to the amassing of colossal fortunes, which acts as a spur to the lower kind of ambition

[160] C.H. Spence, "The Approaching Elections: A Few Plain Words to the Women Electors by One of Themselves," *Register*, 24 March 1896.

[161] [C.H. Spence], "The Dangerous Classes," *Register*, 4 December 1878.

[162] Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, 65, 66.

[163] *Handfasted* is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

> among the middle classes. But it also tends to loosen the sanctions of morality in all classes ….[164]

The free market of America falls well short of an ideal economic system for Spence: "if in America, with a free market among sixty-five millions of well-to-do people and no war budget or conscription to press on industry, this is the best result of freedom of contract, one begins to grope after some other rule of life."[165] But neither was socialism the answer, at least in the general sense that she understood it. She rejected as unrealistic the model of socialism offered by utopians such as Edward Bellamy:

> Socialists have wild ideas as to a reconstruction of society in which a miracle will transform the egoist into the altruist, and when each man will love his neighbour rather better than himself, and yet will have no sacrifice to make through that principle of action.[166]

She may well have had in mind, too, William Lane's belief in socialism as a transformative process that "enthrones Love above the universe, gives us Hope for all who are downtrodden and restores to us Faith in the eternal fitness of things."[167] Yet Spence advocated some of socialism's milder elements such as the associated homes of the utopian socialists, economic cooperation and improved conditions and wages for workers in *A Week in the Future* and in articles such as the series on "The Democratic Ideal."

Improving equality of income was one way in which Spence believed that morality could be improved, with America a particular target. Its material wealth was "like the magician's serpent, devouring all the other agencies which might have worked in better directions." The cost to society was great, with "the processes of culture in America … rapidly creating a class of supercilious infidels, who believe in nothing."[168] Where Walt Whitman "sees the

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[164] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness," *Register*, 28 June 1887.

[165] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "The Democratic Ideal - I," *Register*, 9 May 1892.

[166] C.H. Spence, A Colonist of 1839, "The Democratic Ideal - III," *Register*, 13 August 1892.

[167] Preface to William Lane, *The Workingman's Paradise: An Australian Labour Novel* (1892), ed. (Sydney: Cosme Publishing Co, 1948), ii. The first edition of this was published in April 1892, so Spence would have had the opportunity to read it by the time she wrote the article for the *Register*.

[168] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "The Democratic Ideal – I."

materials for a great and powerful nation," she sees a spiritual desert. In another article, she discusses Matthew Arnold's essay on "Equality" in the *Fortnightly Review*.[169] She writes that Arnold attacks the inequalities in English society that tend "to materialize the upper, to vulgarize the middle, and to brutalize the lower class," relating his observations on the way in which these enormous disparities "depriv[e] the world to a very great degree of the moral force of a real national civilization" to the situation in Australia, where there is considerably less inequality. In spite of this, she concludes that Australia still does not reflect that "sweetness and light" which Arnold believes is emblematic of human perfection. Among the reasons she offers for the lack of grace in Australian society is "the decay of fine manners, the want of consideration for others," and the fact that "rank and wealth are the main Open Sesames to what is called the best society."[170] Elsewhere she suggests that motivating human beings to more virtuous behaviour means changing or enlarging the scope of their desires. Given that most people have a desire for wealth, she argues, perhaps wealth should be looked at from a moral point of view, taking into account not only physical improvements, but those that "tend to the improvement of our intellectual or moral condition," as well as "egoistic or psychic betterments, in which the benefit, though greatly appreciated, seems to depend mainly on the imagination."[171]

Spence's undertaking of the roles of public moralist, social critic and articulator and interpreter of contemporary ideas affecting Australian society locates her within an intellectual class. Most histories of Australian intellectual life, however, do not mention her, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. She was not a member of any literary coteries, nor did she teach at a university; she was not prominent in any of the major religious movements or political parties. In spite of her erudite and well-written literary reviews and essays she has not been seen as a major literary critic.[172] In fact, the institutions that dominated (male) intellectual life in England and Australia were a world apart from

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[169] Matthew Arnold, "Equality," *Fortnightly Review* 29 (March 1878): 313-34.

[170] [C.H. Spence], "Equality as an Influence on Society and Manners," *Register*, 9 August 1878.

[171] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "The Desire to be Rich," *Observer Miscellany*, 8 April 1882.

[172] See the bibliography for details.

Spence's life. Part of the reason for her absence from the pages of Australian intellectual and cultural histories is the same as the reason for women's absence from history more generally, well-documented over the past thirty years by feminist historians.[173] It is evident now, however, that a number of women were engaged in intellectual activities in Australia by the late nineteenth century.

Other factors contributing to Spence's relative invisibility in the earlier part of twentieth-century literary criticism may have been the fact that she was born in Britain, which excluded her from nationalist popular and scholarly interest, and that she wrote novels in the romance genre, widely regarded, as Fiona Giles observes, as "an embarrassing subject."[174] Her status as a middle-class Anglo-Australian, her sometimes ambivalent feminism and her wide-ranging interests, together with the anonymity of much of her journalism, are also likely to have ensured a low profile for Spence in relation to Australian intellectual and cultural history, which has been dominated by the radical nationalists and feminists of the late nineteenth century.

In order to appreciate the significance of Spence's intellectual work, it is helpful to examine it not just in the Australian context, but in the larger context of women's increasing participation in intellectual life during the nineteenth century. Virginia Woolf claimed that the nineteenth century produced more remarkable women than the three previous centuries put together, arguing that "the advance in intellectual power [of women in the nineteenth century] seems … not only sensible but immense … and the effects of education and liberty

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[173] For discussions about women's absence from history, see, for example, Judith Allen, "Evidence and Silence: Feminism and the Limits of History", in *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, ed. Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986); Christina Crosby, *The Ends of History: Victorians and "the Woman Question"* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

For discussions about nineteenth-century women writers in Australia, see, for example, Kay Ferres, ed., *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1993); Susan Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1890s-1930s* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1995); Debra Adelaide, ed., *A Bright and Fiery Troop: Australian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, 1988); Pearce, *Shameless Scribblers*.

[174] For analysis of the reception of romance novels in Australia , see Fiona Giles, "Romance: An Embarrassing Subject", in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan; Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, Part 1.

scarcely to be overrated."[175] Such changes contributed to the undermining of patriarchal ideology, at least partly because, as Dale Spender suggests, insisting on "women's intellectual competence" and "assert[ing] the 'realness' of women's intellectual existence" is extremely subversive in a patriarchal society.[176] By asserting her intellectual authority, Spence took a leading role in the subversion of patriarchal ideology in Australia at the same time that she observed the rules of respectability that were a part of the game of separate spheres. She was engaged in a global discourse on the matter of women's rights from the 1850s, and took part in political, religious and philanthropic activities for the next 50 years that, although not mainstream, were not hidden either. Her very public role was acknowledged by many during her lifetime, as evidenced by the tributes that flowed on the occasion of her 85th birthday in 1905, and then after her death in 1910. Her philanthropy would account for some of this public praise but many articles refer to her intelligence. The *Bulletin*, for example, refers to her as "the brainy and unique Miss Catherine H. Spence," while the *Register* uses the headline "Our Premier Intellectual" for an article about her.[177] An interview in 1893 describes her as the most notable woman in South Australia on the grounds of her "noble work for the good of her fellows," as well as "her great intellectual capacities, her wide reading, her pure literary taste, and sound critical judgment."[178] During her trip to the United States, the Californian *Star* described her as possessing "an original mind, high educational acquirements, and great literary ability," and the obituary by Rose Scott regretted "that that heart, so full of human sympathy, had ceased to beat, and that that brain, so active, so comprehensive and broad-minded, has ceased to act."[179] It seems, therefore, that although Spence was largely marginalised in terms of her relationships with the institutions that were seen as important in intellectual life, she was a highly-respected,

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[175] Virginia Woolf, "The Intellectual Status of Women", in *Women and Writing* (London: The Women's Press, 1979), 55,56.

[176] Spender, *Women of Ideas*, 31.

[177] "The Brainy and Unique Miss Catherine H. Spence," *Bulletin*, 20 April 1895, 13d; "Miss Spence. Our Premier Intellectual," *Register*, 10 June 1909.

[178] "Miss C.H. Spence. An Interview by a Special Representative," *Register*, 4 April 1893, 5.

[179] Reprinted in the *Register*, 24 July 1893, 5c; "The Grand Old Woman of Australia," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 April 1910.

well-regarded and well-known member of the South Australian educated middle class, with claims to the respect of the broader Australian and international community.

In choosing to work as a journalist, albeit unacknowledged for many years, Spence assumed a role that could give her the same power as a man in that professional class and foregoing the passive influence that many suggested was appropriate for women. The kind of newspaper and periodical she wrote for, that is, mainstream rather than radical, gave her wide scope in terms of audiences. Her journalism roams far and wide in its subject-matter, written in a style which is learned, intelligent and "objective"; she uses the editorial "we" just as any other leader writer does. She presents opposing views to the one she is espousing, showing how the *status quo* might not be the best way forward for society. Her own opinions on matters such as Henry George's single tax, village settlements and cooperation often challenge conservative views, but they also reflect the strong dissenting element that existed in South Australia. Indeed, by the 1890s, when the South Australian "Reform Movement" became active, views like these "spread a spirit of idealism, a receptivity to new ideas, and a readiness for change which must have contributed to the liberal Kingston's unprecedentedly long term in office."[180]

I would suggest that, in performing the roles of public moralist, instructor and social critic, Spence generally operates as an organic intellectual, offering her society "an awareness of its own function" across a number of different fields through the transmission of significant social, political and economic ideas. While her ideas were affected by her middle-class values, she was not the type to remain aloof from the concerns of the world around her, but tried to ensure that her thinking had relevance to the society in which she lived. Whereas Gramsci perceives this kind of intellectual as being utilised by their associated class for the purposes of increasing their hold in power, Spence maintained a high degree of independence. Because of this, Spence also resembles the traditional intellectual. Like her nineteenth-century peers, she followed her passions and tried to present the truth as she saw it, willing to upset the *status quo* when necessary. While apparently lacking the power that

[180] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 153.

her male peers possessed, she was still able to participate as a member of the dominant social group largely due to the unique nature of the society in which she lived. The idealism that was a feature of South Australian society, stemming from the nature of its settlement and the kind of citizens who migrated there, together with Spence's conservative brand of dissent, worked to her advantage, reducing resistance to the idea of an intellectual woman that many British women experienced.

There are other reasons, too, for Spence's relatively high status in her time. Deirdre David argues that female intellectuals such as George Eliot, Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were "second-rate intellectual citizens," and tried to escape this status "by locating themselves and the intellectual women they wrote about in an ahistorical realm where the restraints of a male-dominated middle-class society were transcended."[181] The only time Spence approaches the purity of an "ahistorical realm" is in her utopian novel, *Handfasted*, where she constructs a society that largely overcomes the sexual double standard but which is, in the end, not likely to occur in the "real" world. As her heroine Liliard observes, Columba was "a curious political and social experiment on a small scale under the most favourable circumstances."[182] In Spence's case, the woman, the time and the place all combined to enable her to transcend the boundaries between the public and private spheres in a way that was unique, sparing her the necessity of locating her female characters or herself in a more abstract realm. Her journalism largely conforms to the conservative editorial standards of the newspapers and journals she wrote for, but she also uses her position to offer dissenting opinions, particularly about women. She always seems aware of her affinity with the time and place in which she is writing and her status as an educated member of the urban middle class. Unlike Eliot and Browning who, David argues, "deliberately affiliated themselves with the values of an entrenched land-owning class,"[183] Spence does not step outside her own class to offer her critiques.

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[181] David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, 6.

[182] Catherine Helen Spence, *Handfasted* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1984), 334. All future references are to this edition.

[183] David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, 6.

While the English women acted as organic intellectuals in many respects, David suggests that the ways in which they tried to overcome their "second-rate" status position them within the class of traditional intellectuals who resisted their culture to varying degrees.[184] Spence takes a different route in transcending the restrictions of patriarchy, evident from the integration of her heroines into their societies, societies which are generally contemporaneous with Spence's own. These heroines, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, are bound by the powerful patriarchal ideology of her time, but offer resistance to that ideology by rebelling in small and large matters, just as Spence herself did. Like Spence, they never go "beyond the pale."

[184] Ibid.

Chapter 2 A Novel Approach to the "Woman Question"

In this chapter, I discuss how Catherine Spence explored in her romance-realist fiction particular aspects of the "Woman Question," namely women's access to education and employment and the nature of marriage. Her utopian fiction and its concern with sexual equality will be examined in Chapter Three. Studying some of the central female characters of her realist fiction, written between 1854 and 1867, and the ways in which Spence makes them respond to difficult personal challenges during a time of considerable public debate in England about the nature and role of women, will provide some insight into how the Woman Question was interpreted in colonial Australia when there were few published women writers, and when there was not even a nascent women's movement.

Through a comparison between Spence's novels and the work of George Eliot, who was a key influence on Spence's thought and writing, I will demonstrate how two women writers perceived the effects on women of several aspects of nineteenth-century patriarchy. Both held humanist views, having rejected orthodox religion at a relatively young age, and both articulated many of the problems facing their respective societies. Building on an analysis of the similarities and differences in their representation of women's position in society, I will demonstrate the ways in which Spence and Eliot make use of the genres of realism and romance in their representation of women and how these genres were constituted in their writing.

There were a number of connections between the two women and these are often reflected in their writing. As noted in the previous chapter, Spence greatly admired Eliot, whose works she regarded as having been "successful beyond all precedent in the annals of female authorship," for the high moral values depicted in her novels.[1] While they shared a faith in humanism and rejected orthodox religion, Spence managed to find in Unitarianism a religion that suited her humanist tendencies, and Eliot became the most

[1] [C.H. Spence], Review of *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, *Register*, 30 July 1879.

religious of unbelievers.[2] Spence's reviews of works by and about Eliot often describe qualities in Eliot's work and character that Spence aspired to and occasionally exhibited herself. She writes, for example, that *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879) presents more than a biography could "the mental and emotional attitude of George Eliot, with the roots of affectionate gratitude clinging to the past, and yet full of sympathy with the present, and of desire in some way to benefit the future inhabitants of this world."[3] This could equally be said of Spence, as I hope to demonstrate by the end of this thesis. She admired, too, Eliot's respect for those parts of life which she felt "ought to be sacred to respect, admiration and love" such as death and tragedy, but which were often invaded by comic writers to ill effect.[4] Agreeing with Eliot's Theophrastus that there is much that is genuinely ridiculous in the world, she reveals the perspective with which she surveys the world herself: "there is absurdity and incongruity, shortsighted selfishness and social shams that may legitimately raise an invigorating laugh without turning Socrates into burlesque, travestying Hamlet, or making fun of Scripture narrative …." Eliot possessed both humour and wit, according to Spence, with the "descriptions of the harvest supper in *Adam Bede*, of the visit of the Tullivers to Aunt Pullet's, of the conversation between the rustics at the Rainbow in *Silas Marner* … unquestionably specimens of genuine English humour."[5] *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858) showed "a writer, evidently a woman, with the keen eye for the trivial and the domestic comedy of human life, and with the dramatic accuracy of dialogue which distinguished Jane Austin [sic], along with deep religious convictions which Jane Austin had not."[6] Spence's novels indicate her own keen eye for the funnier details of middle-class suburban Australian life, with several critics observing

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[2] See chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of Spence's faith. Eliot's religion has been discussed by a number of critics including U.C. Knoepflmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); Bernard J. Paris, "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity", in *George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. George R. Creeger (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970); Barry Qualls, "George Eliot and Religion", in *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Brian Spittles, *George Eliot: Godless Woman* (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1993).

[3] [C.H. Spence], Review of *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, *Register*, 30 July 1879.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] [C.H. Spence], Review of *George Eliot's Life*, First Notice, *Register*, 7 April 1885.

resemblances between Jane Austen's novels and Spence's.[7] Both writers regarded sympathy as one of the most desirable of human attributes, with Spence noting that the key to Eliot's "power to move to laughter and to tears" is her "sympathetic insight," which is "not learned from books, though the same sympathetic insight gets the very best out of all good books."[8] It is evident from her literary criticism that Spence, too, possessed a high degree of "sympathetic insight," even if her novels are not as powerful and complex as Eliot's.

Spence and Eliot were also united by the desire for an independent income to be achieved through a writing career.[9] Eliot was living in London by 1851 and acting as editor of the *Westminster Review*, as well as writing articles, reviewing and proof-reading for John Chapman, but she received no salary for her editorial work. She realised the necessity of earning an independent income as a result of the relatively small bequest from her father, with whom she had had a difficult relationship, and her estrangement from her brother, Isaac. By this time, her sister, Chrissey's, husband had died, leaving Chrissey with six children under fifteen and £100 a year to live on. As Kathryn Hughes notes, Isaac's reluctance to do more than he absolutely had to for Chrissey gave Eliot even more motivation to work.[10] The move to London after growing up as Mary Anne Evans in the agricultural and industrial provincial world of Warwickshire brought her into contact with a number of significant figures in mid-Victorian artistic and intellectual life including Harriet and James Martineau, Herbert Spencer, James Froude, Thomas Carlyle, Francis Newman, Henry Crabb Robinson, Wilkie Collins, W.R. Greg and George Henry Lewes. Female friends included women's rights activists such as Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkes, and male friends included Charles Bray and Robert Brabant, men who

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[7] See Miles Franklin, *Laughter, Not for a Cage* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956), 59; Ramsland, "Catherine Helen Spence: Writer, Public Speaker and Social and Political Reformer, 1825-1910," 43; Elizabeth Webby, "A Woman Who Did," *Overland* 109 (1987): 80.

[8] Spence, "George Eliot's Life and Works," 238.

[9] For a brief moment, there was almost another significant uniting factor. Kathryn Hughes mentions Eliot's letter of 11 April 1853 to her friends, the Brays, in which she posits the idea of going to Australia with her poverty-stricken sister, Chrissey, and her family to settle them as migrants. But, as Hughes notes, "the bizarre notion of George Eliot in the Antipodes came to nothing" (p. 181).

[10] Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 180.

admired Eliot's intelligence and were used to women who "were educated, well-read and independent-thinking."[11]

Catherine Spence had her own financial incentives for writing, being in the position of having to help support herself and her family from the age of 17. Her father's death in 1846 and her decision to remain single had made the need for an income pressing. She worked first as a governess, and then opened her own school. By the 1850s, with a little financial help from her Scottish aunts, she was able to try to make a living from writing. Spence's world was obviously smaller and more provincial than the London in which George Eliot settled. In spite of Adelaide's size and distance from the more established cities of Melbourne and Sydney, however, it was lively and progressive with an active intellectual, cultural and spiritual life of its own. It also gave Spence opportunities that Eliot may not have had; as Bruce Bennett notes, "the small community in which Spence found herself and where she worked, gave her some powerful insights into human suffering and evolutionary reform." [12] Eventually Spence's public duties took precedence over her writing, providing her with the kind of life – "a life of beneficent activity of value to a community" - that George Eliot's heroines aspired to but generally failed to achieve.[13] Spence speculated about what might have happened if Eliot had gone to Australia "where there was no literary outlook or outlet." Commenting on the limitations on Eliot's early life and the possibilities that existed in colonial society – "formed of somewhat adventurous people from the three kingdoms" – she wrote that

> [Eliot's] large brain and warm heart might have turned to other things than literature. Everything is important in a young community – its industries, its politics, its moral atmosphere are mainly dependent on the calibre of the leading men and women in it. She might, in such circumstances, have taken a prominent part in public movements, from which she kept aloof because of her absorption in her own vocation, which she considered that of the aesthetic teacher.[14]

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[11] Ibid., 107.

[12] Bennett, *An Australian Compass*, 157.

[13] Ibid., 156.

[14] Spence, "George Eliot's Life and Works," 220-1.

The worlds of the two women were different in another important respect, with the gold rush emptying Adelaide of many of its men. William Bakewell, who arranged for the publication of Spence's novel, *Clara Morison* (1854), in London, writes in his preface to the novel that "the exodus was almost complete … None but women and children were to be seen, anywhere, and the skill manifested by them in the management of affairs was the subject of much admiration."[15] Adelaide was not only geographically distant from Eliot's London, but located in a new world where women outnumbered men, not because they were "superfluous" but because they were needed to maintain a viable community in the absence of men. This is not to say that patriarchal hegemony vanished altogether, for men's disappearance was only temporary with enough men remaining to ensure its continuation. There was a difference noticed by many, however. Bakewell waxes lyrical about this new silent society in which "no sight or sound of manual labour met the ear or eye," ignoring the fact that tasks such as chopping wood and mending houses had to continue notwithstanding the small number of men. In this new female society, "gentleness, and courtesy, and loving kindness reigned," which Bakewell suggests might have stimulated Tennyson to add another book to his "Princess" if he had been there at the time.[16] Interestingly, his description is also resonant of female utopias such as Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762), Mary E. Lane's *Mizora* (1889) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915).[17]

Despite this opportunity for women to fashion society in new ways, there was little occurring in mid-nineteenth-century Australia in terms of women's rights activism in fiction or in fact.[18] Such relative isolation makes Spence's proto-feminist fiction of the 1850s particularly significant. It is difficult to know exactly how isolated she was, given that women's writing during the period between the 1850s and 1880 has received less attention than that of the 1880s and 1890s. With the first wave of the feminist movement

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[15] Spence, *Clara Morison*, xxxvi.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Utopias written and created by women are discussed in more detail in ch. 3.

[18] For discussion about the later development of the women's rights movement in Australia, see p. 30.

emerging in the 1880s and 1890s, and the upsurge in women novelists and journalists in Australia at that time, this focus is understandable, but it also highlights Spence's pioneering role in taking up issues relating to women's rights in fiction. The issues which Spence raises in several of her novels from *Clara Morison* onwards relate to women's lack of employment opportunities, what kind of education they should receive and the nature of marriage. Anyone familiar with George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2) will notice the similarity of themes, which is not to say that Spence and Eliot were alone in addressing such matters in their work in the mid-nineteenth century: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Alfred Tennyson's *The Princess* (1847), for example, had already demonstrated British writers' engagement with aspects of the Woman Question. [19]

Spence's work was influenced to a great degree by British writers, a situation that was not unusual as Elizabeth Webby notes, for "in early Australia, as in all colonial societies, the most important influence on the production of literature was the relationship with the parent culture."[20] Some of the specific writers who had an impact on Spence date from her childhood reading which included the novels of Sir Walter Scott, Maria Edgeworth's *Tales for Young and Old*, Aikin's *British Poets*, Goldsmith's complete works, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, as well as the Calvinistic works that caused her the grief described in chapter four. As she grew older, her reading became very wide-ranging. She reread Jane Austen's novels every year, was very familiar with Margaret Oliphant's and George Eliot's work and reviewed a considerable amount of English fiction and non-fiction for newspapers.[21] The poetry of the Brownings was a particular favourite, being the subject of her first public lectures, and she regarded the writing of Shakespeare,

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[19] For discussions about British women writers and the Woman Question see, for example, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984); Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets, and William Veeder, *The Woman Question: Literary Issues, 1837-1883*, 3 vols., *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and American, 1837-1883* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1983); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago, 1999); Nicola Diane Thompson, ed., *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[20] Elizabeth Webby, "Writers, Printers, Readers: The Production of Australian Literature before 1855", in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan, 113.

[21] Spence, *Autobiography*. pp.11, 18, 62, 26, 15, 25.

Milton, Thomas Gray, Goldsmith, Coleridge, Keats, Burns, Scott, Tennyson and Jean Ingelow as "near to her heart."[22]

Despite the influence of British writers in Australia, however, the representation of women in English novels that reflected the changes taking place in Victorian society was not automatically reproduced in Australia. The issues which Spence raises do not appear in other writing by women in early to mid-nineteenth-century Australia, although, given the scarcity of women's writing, this is not surprising. The first novel known to be written by a woman, Anna Maria Bunn's *The Guardian: A Tale, by an Australian* (1838), does contain two heroines, although one of them kills herself very early in the book.[23] The other is unconventional enough but, as Susan McKernan notes, Bunn "is an entertainer who openly gratifies her readers' appetites for the sensational while providing plenty of comic relief."[24] Another woman writer from this period, Mary Theresa Vidal, was more concerned with providing moral values for servants and the working class, expressing conservative views about the existing social order, but it is possible, as McKernan argues, to see her as "the founder of an alternate feminine literary tradition in which the celebrated masculine freedoms of Australia impose on the lives of women."[25]

Indications of an engagement with women's rights emerged with Spence's *Clara Morison* and the novels of Louisa Atkinson, the first woman novelist to be born in Australia. Atkinson was concerned with demonstrating moral values, but she was a humanist and feminist like Spence to the extent that she wrote about the consequences of the social oppression of women in novels such as *Gertrude the Emigrant* (1857) and *Tom Hellicar's Children*.[26] Caroline Leakey's *The Broad Arrow* (1858) similarly demonstrates a feminist

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[22] "Institute Lectures," *Register*, 11 November 1871.

[23] See Susan McKernan, "Two Early Novelists: Anna Maria Bunn and Mary Theresa Vidal", in *A Bright and Fiery Troop*, ed. Debra Adelaide; Webby, "Writers, Printers, Readers: The Production of Australian Literature before 1855", 116-17.

[24] McKernan, "Two Early Novelists: Anna Maria Bunn and Mary Theresa Vidal", 56.

[25] Ibid., 58.

[26] Ibid., 81-2. The latter novel was serialised in the *Sydney Mail* in 1871 and not published in book form until 1983 by Mulini Press.

concern through its depiction of the experiences of a female convict, Maida Gwynnham, "tested to extremity by the patriarchal structures of a moralistic and punitive society."[27] The heroine of the first novel to be published in South Australia, *Marian* (1859) by Matilda Evans (Maud Jean Franc), also showed a determination "to be independent and succeed," even if she married a wealthy husband at the end.[28] Later writers such as Ada Cambridge, Rosa Praed, Tasma (Jessie Couvreur) and Mary Gaunt wrote novels that presented women as central characters, often using the romance genre to question conventional views about marriage.[29] The independent, rebellious and outspoken female characters of the English New Woman novels of the late nineteenth century were not replicated in Australian novels but transformed into the "Australian Girl," intelligent, well-read and hungry for independence, and represented by characters such as Miles Franklin's Sybylla Melvyn and Catherine Martin's Stella Courtland.[30] Spence's heroines bear some resemblance to these characters and to the urban-dwelling, well-educated heroines of British New Woman fiction but differ from them insofar as they are thrust into a new world through migration and forced to make the best of their circumstances.

Spence's response to the ways in which some of the earlier English texts engaged with the Woman Question can be discerned, at times faintly, in her heroines. In her first published novel, *Clara Morison* (1854), Clara is not a spirited, feisty character like Jane Eyre, nor is she as wild and passionate as Maggie Tulliver. She is altogether more tearful

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[27] Shirley Walker, "'Wild and Wilful' Women: Caroline Leakey and *the Broad Arrow*", in *A Bright and Fiery Troop*, ed. Debra Adelaide, 89.

[28] Barbara Wall, *Our Own Matilda: Matilda Jane Evans 1827-1886* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1994), 3. Evans is also known as Matilda Congreve.

[29] For discussions about these and other women writers in nineteenth-century Australia, see, for example, Adelaide, ed., *A Bright and Fiery Troop;* Ferres, ed., *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930;* Fiona Giles, *Too Far Everywhere: The Romantic Heroine in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1998).

[30] For discussions about these characters, see, for example, Allen, "Catherine Martin: An Australian Girl"; Giles, *Too Far Everywhere*, ch. 5; Susan Martin, "Relative Correspondence: Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* and the Influence of Nineteenth-Century Australian Women's Writing", in *The Time to Write*, ed. Kay Ferres; Frances McInherny, "Miles Franklin, *My Brilliant Career*, and the Female Tradition", in *Who Is She? Images of Woman in Australian Fiction*, ed. Shirley Walker (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press); Kerry M. White, "The Real Australian Girl?: Some Post-Federation Writers for Girls", in *The Time to Write*, ed. Kay Ferres.

and timid, more concerned about maintaining her English middle-class respectability than either of those two heroines of Victorian literature. On the trip to Australia, Clara regards her shipboard companion, Miss Waterstone, as imprudent in flirting with the two young men who share their mess. She frowns on the overfamiliarity and impudence that one of these young men displays towards Miss Waterstone and herself, and resists asking one of her fellow coach passengers on the journey to Adelaide from the port the whereabouts of a respectable boarding-house because "she did not like to take the liberty"(18). And yet she is shown to have a strong and determined will. She is intelligent and chafes at the lack of opportunities available for her to make a living in the young colony. She finds relief in literary discussions with Charles Reginald, which give the reader some insight into nineteenth-century receptions of English literature in Australia and the impact of women novelists. Clara asks, for example, if "Jane Eyre, who is neither handsome nor what is called good, [is not] a much more interesting and natural character than you will find in men's books?" (245). She uses poetry and her journal to write down the feelings that she is incapable of expressing in public, giving vent to her frustrations about the barriers that stand in her way:

> Lords of creation! How I envy you!
> What in these stirring times can woman do?
> Shut up each avenue, close-barred each gate,
> Every approach forbid her to the Great!
> Even if Ambition does not fire her soul,
> If Independence merely is her goal,
> Scarce can her head and hands, however good,
> Earn that small pittance, even a livelihood. (122)

The orphaned Clara's lack of accomplishments makes her quest for a governess's position almost impossible, with youth and inexperience adding to her problems.

Clara's frustrations portray the difficulties that lay in wait for middle-class women who imagined that they could escape circumstances of genteel poverty in Britain by migrating to Australia. If employment for governesses was scarce in England, it was hardly an ideal choice for middle-class women who migrated to Australia either. A governess who had arrived in Australia in 1864 suggested in a letter home that many women who migrate to

Australia and obtain work as governesses would be better off becoming servants: they would not only receive higher pay but "servants are more considered, there is more freedom and independence than at home."[31] Indeed, by the 1860s, domestic service was exactly what some feminists in England were promoting to prospective female middle-class emigrants, according to Jan Gothard, "a suggestion made more palatable by the location of the work, far from Britain."[32] Their argument ran along the lines that to potential employers such employees would be seen as "superior," while the women themselves would be offered a form of independence not available in Britain. Spence's own work as a governess for three years from 1843 was obviously not the model for Clara's experience, given that she had "enjoyed the work and … was proud of the payment,"[33] but for Clara to find work immediately and easily would have eliminated the dramatic impact of her entering domestic service.

Spence, recognising the problems that class presents in Clara making the transition to servant, suggests that it would not be an easy task for Clara and mocks the fictional conventions of the day: "when young ladies in novels are set to work to which they are unaccustomed, it is surprising how instantaneously they always get over all the difficulties before them" (70). Both middle- and working-class characters question her ability to work as a servant, given her lack of appropriate skills. Her uncle's friend, Mr Campbell, "admired the girl's independent spirit … but when he looked at the little white hands and taper fingers, the slight figure and elegant bearing of the young lady, he was rather doubtful whether anybody would take her as a servant" (66). Mrs Handy, the owner of Clara's boarding-house, sympathises with her predicament but questions her physical and emotional fitness for the work, as well as raising the likelihood of her ruining her chances of a good marriage: "by the time you have tried it for a year, you will long to get

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[31] Geoffrey Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants 1788-1988* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990), 64-5. See also A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration 1830-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979).

[32] Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 55.

[33] Spence, *Autobiography*, 18.

free; and I fancy you would not like to marry the butcher or the baker, or any of that sort of people" (67-8).

Spence signals in *Clara Morison* a belief in the respectability of manual work that she later expounds in her journalism and in *A Week in the Future* (1888-9), as discussed in chapter one. While Kay Daniels argues that Spence perpetuated the patriarchal, middle-class structures that repressed the working-class in the nineteenth century,[34] it is also arguable that her appreciation of the value of manual labour, particularly of that work traditionally done by women, places her among social critics such as William Morris.[35] Unlike Morris's romantic portrayal of domestic work in *News from Nowhere*, however, her depiction of Clara's life as a servant is realistic and down-to-earth:

> She found the work dreadfully hard, and by no means fascinating … She was very awkward at lighting a fire, and would often let it go out black just when it was most wanted. The camp-oven was a perfect heart-break to her, for she could never hit upon any medium between scorching heat and luke-warmness … She made a considerable smashing of crockery the first week; next week she scalded her arm pretty severely … And as for her work ever being done, she never could see over the top of it (70-1).

In spite of her suffering, Clara sees the dignity of paid domestic work and the advantages it offers her: "I will keep out of debt and out of danger; and there is no necessity for being married" (67). The latter point is dubious, given that Clara is the heroine of a romantic novel, but her words indicate that she possesses strength of will, a realisation of the importance of financial independence, and a desire to maintain her respectability. For Clara, paid employment means she can avoid having to marry merely to solve her financial problems, enabling her to reject her uncle's grudging offer of funds for the return trip to Scotland. Her attempts to maintain a stoic attitude are undermined, however, by a painful self-consciousness about her drop in status. When Reginald, Clara's love-interest, arrives to stay as a guest, she is overwhelmed by embarrassment:

> When she did bring in candles and tea, her cheeks were painfully flushed, and her hand trembled so that she scarcely put the cups and plates in their places … She

[34] Daniels, "History and Literature: A Study in the Novels of C.H. Spence", 59.

[35] This is discussed in ch. 1 of this thesis.

> cast one imploring look at her friend of the boarding-house [Reginald], to let him know that he must take no notice of her; it was understood, and Reginald only gave one or two stolen glances to see how the young lady got on at service (81).

He offers to leave, aware that his presence discomforts her, and asks whether she could not have "done better": "this is a sphere for which you were not formed, and it must be painful to you to submit to the position you hold here" (83). But Clara is made of sterner stuff: "I am not heroic enough to deny that it is painful, but I had no alternative," she says. "I had no money, so I determined that if my head was valueless I would try my hands" (83).

The downtrodden governess is a common figure in Victorian fiction, with some characters such as Jane Eyre overcoming their difficulties through marriage, but *Clara Morison* is unique in representing a "lady" surviving the experience of working as a servant with her class status intact,[36] without romanticising the problems and difficulties of manual work. Spence conforms to what Susan Martin describes as:

> one of the most powerful projects in nineteenth-century Australian women's fiction [of] the development of an ideal of a specifically Australian lady, a woman whose gentility and status were so innate that she could indulge in the most menial of tasks without loss of caste, and could always be recognized as a lady."[37]

She combines the romantic conventions that require some form of idealised love to be present in the novel with a realism which George Levine uses to describe George Eliot's style, a style that demands not "simply accuracy in representation of things as they are…[but] a kind of authenticity, an honest representation of one's own feelings and perceptions …."[38] Thus, Spence refuses to make "onerous work miraculously simple."[39] *Clara Morison* suggests that what would have been impossible in England because of its rigid social hierarchy becomes possible in Australia, indicating a local inflection to ideas

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[36] I am grateful to Susan Martin for highlighting this point.

[37] Martin, "Relative Correspondence: Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* and the Influence of Nineteenth-Century Australian Women's Writing", 64.

[38] George Levine, "Introduction: George Eliot and the Art of Realism", in *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7.

[39] Martin, "Relative Correspondence: Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* and the Influence of Nineteenth-Century Australian Women's Writing", 64.

about feminism and class. Where British feminists had concluded by the 1870s that "classes and sexes must sink or swim together; that which is impossible for the man cannot be made available – speaking from the class point of view – for the woman,"[40] fewer distinctions relating to the preservation of gentility were made in Australia. As James Hammerton observes:

> the complex British rules which established social identity required revision in a pioneering colonial society like Australia; if the keeping of servants was sufficient to define 'middle-classness' in Britain, it certainly was not the case in early colonial Australia, where most people, regardless of background, frequently had to dirty their hands.[41]

Spence affirms Clara's lady-like status through the discovery of respectable relations, and never letting Clara blend into the milieu of the working-class servant but, rather, maintaining her difference in various ways. Clara's insistence on continuing to read and write in her leisure-time, her lack of physical strength and her good taste all set her apart from what Spence regards as the average domestic servant. Spence's concern seems to be less with blurring the boundaries relating to gender and class that occurred in nineteenth-century society more generally, however, than with "figuring a world in which those boundaries are not necessary to make sense of that world."[42] The new world of colonial Australia enables women to cast off much of the idea that the idleness of middle-class women was a marker of respectability. Thus most of Spence's heroines are engaged in paid work as single women and happily engage in domestic work after marriage.

The ideological imperative that demanded women be idle to remain respectable was being undermined in Britain anyway by the debate about women's access to a wider range of employment, the existence of the so-called "superfluous" women, and the fact that

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[40] *Women and Work*, 32 (9 January 1875): 4, quoted in Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, 35.

[41] Ibid., 63.

[42] Susan Martin, "Ideas of the Self and of the Landscape in Nineteenth-Century Australian Women's Writing" (PhD, Monash University, 1990), 20.

increasing numbers of middle- and working-class women were engaged in the public sphere in a number of capacities.[43] As Martha Vicinus observes,

> the main difficulty with the perfect lady as a model of behavior even in the middle classes … was the narrowness of the definition. Few women could afford to pursue the course laid out for them, either economically, socially or psychologically.[44]

Australia's need for more women to redress the gender imbalance in the population, as well as the shortage of domestic servants, meant that remaining loyal to this changing ideal was impractical. To maintain the same rules of social respectability existing in Victorian England, where "the main distinguishing mark between the middle-class woman and those who were considered socially inferior was the attitude of mind which demanded that she should have at least one servant to wait on her,"[45] was impossible in a place where no servants were available. Thus emigrants with no useful skills were not regarded as desirable colonists. By the 1850s, emigration propaganda was no longer advising middle-class women "to pursue the same unmarketable occupation of the governess to which they were restricted at home."[46] Instead, entering domestic service should be regarded as an eminently acceptable alternative, with *The Emigrant's Guide to Australia* suggesting that any female who acquired such skills would

> find herself released from the painful dependence, bondage, and trying position of 'the young person' in this country. There they would at once take a respectable position in society, have their own home; and instead of begging for bread, their industry would be begged of them, and handsomely rewarded.[47]

The reality was that single women arriving in Australia were not all immediately snapped up by husbands, a fact that Spence was well aware of. As she noted in her autobiography,

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[43] The extent of middle-class women's idleness in mid- to late nineteenth-century Britain and Australia has been questioned in, among others, Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UniversityPress, 1995).

[44] Martha Vicinus, "Introduction: The Perfect Victorian Lady", in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), x.

[45] Catherine Hall, "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology", in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. Sandra Burman (New York: St Martin's Press, 1979), 28.

[46] Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, 113.

[47] Quoted in Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, 113.

one of the reasons she wrote *Clara Morison* was to counter the idea put forward by William Thackeray of a shipload of women travelling to Australia, "as if these were all to be gentlemen's wives – as if there was such a scarcity of educated women that anything wearing petticoats had the prospect of a great rise in position."[48]

Spence takes up the argument for increasing the range of occupations open to women in *Mr Hogarth's Will* (1865). She did not subscribe to the notion of separate spheres for single women, seeing it as irrational, and responsible for women being forced into bad marriages. The dire financial situation of the heroine, Jane Melville, gives Spence the opportunity to articulate the lack of logic used to justify shutting women out of so many areas of employment. Like Clara Morison, Jane is an orphaned heroine who has received an unconventional education. Her dead uncle's will puts into practice his belief in the equality of men's and women's minds by leaving Jane and her sister, Alice, with virtually nothing. He instead leaves his estate to Francis Hogarth, whom he believes to be his illegitimate son, trusting that the education given to the girls will enable them to make their own way in the world rather than becoming the victims of fortune-hunters. What he does not envisage is that, despite being "educated in a more masculine manner than most boys,"[49] the sisters would still find it difficult in Victorian Britain to support themselves. Miss Thomson, Jane's first mentor, understands the problem confronting Jane: "society seems to say to gentlewomen who have not enough to live on, 'teach or marry,' and the governess market and the marriage market are sadly overstocked" (28). Nevertheless Jane, the more practical of the two sisters and the more experienced in household management, sets out to find a job. Her progress and failures in this and in her romance with Francis Hogarth form a novel that is at least partially a *bildungsroman*.

Jane's failures begin with her attempts to find work in Scotland. She decides against applying for the position of second matron of "the principal asylum for the insane in Scotland" on the grounds that it is grossly underpaid, while its conditions resemble those

[48] Spence, *Autobiography*, 22.

[49] Catherine Helen Spence, *Mr Hogarth's Will* (1865), ed. (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988), 20. All future references are to this edition.

of a prison: “even the privileges annexed to the situation, of a small bedroom for herself and a parlour shared by two others, with a fortnight’s holidays in the year, though very necessary to prevent the second matron being removed speedily into one of the wards,” were not enough to tempt her (36). She next considers a position as bank clerk, but the head clerk can barely restrain himself from laughing at the idea: “it would never do, my dear madam, … young ladies have quite a different sphere from that of ledgers and passbooks,” (37) sounding distinctly like Mr Brooke in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* on the subject of young ladies meddling with his documents. In a passage remarkable for the power and modernity of its feminist arguments, Jane responds to his refusal to even consider her for the position with impressive logic:

> … in consideration of the prejudice against my sex, I will take the place, and accept the salary you would give to a raw lad of sixteen, though I am an educated and experienced woman of twenty-three. I want something that I can rise by … Young women in Paris are clerks and bookkeepers; why should that not be so here? (37-8)

His response – that “we consider our customs very much better than the French” (38) – demonstrates that she has to contend not only with sexism but jingoism as well. To his argument that she would distract his clerks, she replies: “Do I look like a person who would turn any man’s head? If I do such mischief, turn me off; but I ask, in the name of common sense and common justice, a fair trial” (38). The head clerk possesses the whole range of arguments used to prevent women from entering traditional male occupations: the Board of Directors would oppose it; females are not noted for their powers of secrecy and would therefore put customers’ privacy at risk; they would constitute a threat to the numbers of marrying men if women “thrust themselves into masculine avocations” (39). He acknowledges the difficulty for “exceptional women who court a wider field of usefulness,” but for the sake of “the average happiness ….” Here he is cut off by Jane who points out how those women who are employed in paid work are exploited, revealing the hypocrisy involved in a system that decrees women should not be employed, but if they are, they should be paid extraordinarily low amounts. The extreme conclusion she draws in order to graphically illustrate the consequences of such exploitation and lack of logic is that women who need an income on which to live would be better off dying (39).

Jane next tries for a reader's position in a publishing house where she finds more irrational arguments against the wider employment of women. When the publisher points out that "it is not the custom of the trade to employ Ladies of the Press" because "they do not know the terms or the routine of the business," Jane knows that she could quickly learn these things, but recognises the prejudice that overwhelms logic: "I see you do not wish to employ me, even if I had them at my finger-ends (40)." In this industry, women are employed only to stitch books which are then sent on to male bookbinders; there is no possibility of them improving their position because bookbinding is "man's work." Jane uses irony to highlight the inequity of this: "you have girls at low wages to do what is tedious, and men at higher to do what is artistic; that is a very fair division of labour (41)." In an indication of the increasing acceptability of women authors and artists during the nineteenth century, the publisher tells her, "write a good book, and will [sic] give you a good price for it: design a fine illustration, and that has a market value independent of sex" (41). Writing and drawing were seen as women's work, but unfortunately Jane has no aptitude for these. Even an appeal to the sisterhood fails when Jane applies to the head of a dressmaking and millinery establishment for book-keeping work on the basis that "surely women might put all their work in the way of their own sex" (42). But, says Mrs Dunn, "nobody ever thought of having young ladies to make up their books … a gentleman coming in gave confidence both to herself and to the public" (42). Through Jane's experiences, Spence raises the possibility that logic and employers' self-interest might be able to overcome such gender prejudice, but the innate conservatism of the capitalist system works against changing the *status quo*. Women's lack of a useful education was obviously only one part of the problem.

Where Spence is explicit in highlighting the problems faced by women in search of satisfying occupations, George Eliot is more indirect and subtle, showing the web that ensnares them. While Spence's heroines generally succeed in finding some path to independence and happy marriages, Eliot demonstrates the cost to women and society more generally of women leading narrow and restricted lives. This is never as clear as in

Middlemarch (1871-2). This novel's setting of a provincial English town with its powerful patriarchal structure makes Dorothea Brooke's attempt to create a greater life for herself more difficult than it is for Spence's penniless heroines. Dorothea sees fulfilling work as vital to her self-respect and for the achievement of a fully-realised life, rather than as a means of supporting herself. The restrictive social life of a young upper-middle-class woman resembles for her "a walled-in maze of small paths leading no whither,"[50] while her notions of creating generous schemes for the benefit of the working class only adds to her peculiarity in the eyes of her neighbours.

It is not only women such as Dorothea who suffer from such restrictions, as Spence observes of the provincial life depicted by Eliot in her novels: it is "a life the dulness [sic] of which would oppress our modern, and especially our colonial, young men and women with despair …"[51] Women suffer disproportionately, however, and it is clear that Spence sympathises with the problems faced by Dorothea, asking if those who argue that women are sheltered from the trials of active, public lives "ever calculate what women suffer from dulness, from vacuity, from the want of a worthy object in life?"[52] Thus, with Dorothea frustrated in her search for knowledge of "the truths of life," and begging to be delivered from "her girlish subjection to her own ignorance," Spence sees it as unsurprising that she is so enthusiastic at the idea of marriage to Casaubon:

> Only if you plant a heart and soul like that of Dorothea Brooke in such a limited sphere, if with all the desire to work and to bless there seemed to be nothing she could do for her fellow creatures but to give alms and be curtseyed to, you cannot wonder that she seized the opportunity offered her of what she thought a worthy life as helpmate to a man who had the reputation of being a great scholar ….[53]

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[50] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ch.3.

For discussions of Eliot's attitudes to women and the representation of women in her novels, see, for example, Barrett, *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines;* David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, ch. 10, 11, 12; Kate Flint, "George Eliot and Gender", in *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Laurie Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), ch.5; Nancy L. Paxton, *George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism, Evolutionism, and the Reconstruction of Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[51] Spence, "George Eliot," 150.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ch.3; Spence, "George Eliot," 150.

In contrast to Dorothea, Eliot's anti-heroine, Gwendolen Harleth, appears to revel in dullness and vacuity. When her family faces financial problems, a notion that she has difficulty coming to grips with, she is unable to accept the course that her uncle plans for her. Gwendolen, unfortunately, has few useful skills or practical ideas about life and money, has received a typical middle-class girl's education and has an inordinately high opinion of her abilities reinforced by those around her. The pragmatism of Spence's Clara Morison is beyond her when she says to her mother: "but I don't resign myself to live at Sawyer's Cottage and see you working for sixpences and shillings … I shall not do it. I shall do what is more befitting our rank and education."[54] Eliot reveals Gwendolen's flaws which are not hers alone, but are exacerbated by the imposition of rigid roles on women by the society in which she lives. When Herr Klesmer delivers his verdict on her capacities for a career in acting, he is polite but frank, summing up who she is in the eyes of society: "you have not been called upon to be anything but a charming young lady, whom it is an impoliteness to find fault with" (239). And charming young ladies who suddenly want to act and sing, who "wish to try a life of arduous, unceasing work and - uncertain praise," have a long road in front of them, requiring much self-sacrifice, patience and self-discipline (239). Her marriage to Grandcourt appears inevitable, and inevitably doomed. Eliot's realism demonstrates here what George Levine suggests are the "costs to the realist program," that the truth is "that the world is not made in our interest, not 'mindful' of us."[55] Spence's realism seems tame in comparison but not less truthful. Her heroines, Clara and Jane are more prosaic; they are not pampered and spoilt, are only moderately endowed with talent and do not deceive themselves about it. Although they care about respectability, they are not as concerned with their status in society as they are about not compromising their morality and being able to support themselves.

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[54] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), ed. (London: Panther, 1970), 220. All future references are to this edition.

[55] Levine, "Introduction: George Eliot and the Art of Realism", 10.

Eliot offers Dorothea and Gwendolen what she sees as the only solution available to women like them but then chronicles the results that flow from their ignorance and naïveté, highlighting their complicity in the disasters of their marriages, as well as that of their family and friends. Such a course is not taken by Spence's heroines, Clara and Jane, who are liberated to a great extent by their lack of ties to older, established communities. Their desire to succeed as valuable members of their new societies means that they persevere with their attempts to find paid work, undergoing considerable hardships along the way and ultimately marrying for love in the romantic tradition. Spence and Eliot both suggest that marriage is not a decision to be taken lightly or for the wrong reasons by either sex, a point noted by Spence in relation to Lydgate, "whose life seems to have been made unreasonably hard for him by this one mistake [that is, marrying Rosamond]."[56] But, she adds, "when one considers the thoughtless way in which a marriage choice is made, and the very slight circumstances which lead to this irrevocable step, the world may be none the worse for a few words of warning."

In order to allow her heroines the greatest possible latitude in beginning their new lives, Spence gives them the paradoxical advantage of making them orphans. Although she never permits them to venture beyond the bounds of respectable behaviour, they possess a freedom to make their own decisions that might have been curtailed by the presence of those custodians of middle-class respectability, mothers. Certainly, this was how Florence Nightingale viewed mothers in *Cassandra*. Their absence from much nineteenth-century fiction provided a "space of fantasy" in which daughters could "escape from the coercive model of 'Woman's mission' and feminine behaviour … embodied in, and policed by, middle-class society's 'good mother,'" as Lyn Pykett argues.[57] Spence's Clara and Jane have no mothers or fathers, a plot device common in Victorian romance and domestic novels. Not only does this establish the heroine as "solitary and unguided, and in search of renewed family stability through romantic love,"[58] it also enables her to attempt to find

[56] Spence, "George Eliot," 158.

[57] See Nightingale, *Cassandra*.Lyn Pykett, "Women Writing Woman: Nineteenth-Century Representations of Gender and Sexuality", in *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900*, ed. Joanne Shattock, 88.

[58] Giles, *Too Far Everywhere*, 46.

employment in fields such as domestic service and publishing or book-keeping which lay outside that carefully circumscribed sphere normally reserved for young middle-class women. These two characters have the added advantage of being emigrants to the new world, which as frightening as the timid Clara initially finds it, allows the kind of freedom that Eliot's English heroines are unable to experience.

Despite the costs to Eliot's heroines of the restrictions and expectations placed on them by their communities, the costs of cutting those ties are greater. Indeed, the life of the Princess Alcharisi in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* offers an object lesson to would-be feminists who reject their traditional roles as wives and mothers. In pursuing a singing career, Alcharisi has cast off all of those other elements that make up women's lives: she "wanted to live out the life that was in me, and not to be hampered with other lives" (566). She rejects her faith, her son and her father in the quest to "live for [her] art," claiming the right "to be something more than a mere daughter and mother" (578, 601). The traditional Jewish woman's life that her father wanted for her was a form of bondage that a career could liberate her from, enabling her to live a more fulfilling life. Her cry for freedom is a powerful articulation of the need for something more than marriage and motherhood, when she says to Deronda: "you may try - but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl" (571). But, like so many of George Eliot's female characters, she pays a high price for her rebellion. She is haunted by the past in a way that she cannot escape; her terminal illness causes "an agony of pain" that makes it seem "as if all the life I have chosen to live, all thoughts, all will, forsook me and left me alone in spots of memory, and I can't get away … a great horror comes over me: what do I know of life or death?" (575). In cutting ties with her past and with her Jewish faith, Alcharisi does what Eliot regards as unnatural, a position which she frequently articulated in her essays and novels. In her 1856 review essay on Wilhelm von Riehl's *The Natural History of German Life*, for example, Eliot claims that:

> The nature of European men has its roots intertwined with the past, and can only be developed by allowing those roots to remain undisturbed while the process of

> development is going on, until that perfect ripeness of the seed which carries with it a life independent of the root.[59]

Similarly, in Felix Holt's "Address to Working Men," she emphasises the need for change to occur within the framework of the existing state of society without destroying "the common estate of society." This estate consists of "that treasure of knowledge, science, poetry, refinement of thought, feeling, and manners, great memories and the interpretation of great records, which is carried on from the minds of one generation to the minds of another."[60]

Alcharisi's punishment can be read as the result of Eliot's condemnation of those who would reject the past, but also as a statement about the sexual politics that lay behind Alcharisi's desire to put career before the traditional duties of woman; as Kathryn Hughes argues, George Eliot wanted the development of women "to keep [them] securely attached to the family and the home rather than in paid employment. Instead of a new generation of mediocre women novelists, painters and doctors, she wanted intelligent wives and thoughtful mothers."[61] And yet Alcharisi enjoyed the success and adulation that came to her: "the name had magic wherever it was carried. Men coveted me" (573). She was "a queen" during that period of her life as "the greatest lyric actress of Europe," leaving the reader to wonder if perhaps the price she paid was not so high after all. Like Eliot herself, Alcharisi was outstanding in her field, a circumstance that allowed her more scope than ordinary women. This characterisation is not inconsistent with Eliot's élitism which she conveys in a letter to Barbara Bodichon: "no good can come to women, more than to any class of male mortal, while each aims at doing the highest kind of work, which ought to be held in sanctity as what only the few can do well."[62] This attitude also explains to some extent the cruelty meted out to Gwendolen; "the true gospel," according

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[59] George Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life" (1856), in *George Eliot: Selected Critical Writings*, ed. Rosemary Ashton, 283.

[60] George Eliot, "Address to Working Men" (1867), in *Felix Holt, the Radical*, ed. Peter Coveney (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 621.

[61] Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 370.

[62] Letters, IV, 425, March 1868, quoted in Frederick Karl, *George Eliot: A Biography* (London: Flamingo, 1996), 423.

to Eliot, was "that the deepest disgrace is to insist on doing work for which we are unfit - to do work of any sort badly."[63]

Spence, on the other hand, suggests that sometimes it is necessary to do "work for which we are unfit." Not possessed of the greatness of Eliot's heroines, Clara and Jane find positions that do not necessarily suit them, but do their best anyway; the need for financial independence and the practical requirements of their circumstances overwhelm other considerations. Jane's feminist arguments for permitting women's access to non-traditional fields of employment do not prevent her from working as a housekeeper and governess, nor do they save her from a conventional romantic ending. Nevertheless, Spence seems to valorise those women who are willing to fight for the right to work in non-traditional fields over those who would remain content with what they have been assigned by the patriarchal system. Alice, Jane Melville's sister in *Mr Hogarth's Will*, for example, is more artistically inclined than Jane, with fewer practical skills. Far from possessing the determination of Jane or Eliot's Alcharisi or Mirah, she has very limited notions about what she can do to contribute to their income. To Jane's question about what she would like to do, she responds rather limply:

> Why, I have never thought of doing anything but being with you, working a little, reading a little, going out a little, and having nobody over me but you … It stuns me to be told that I must go to work for a livelihood (12).

The two sisters provide contrasting representations of women of the mid-Victorian period: the proto-feminist Jane who desires independence and justice for women, and the "angel in the house," Alice, who is submissive and deferential to the male characters in the novel. Alice's character remains less interesting and less rounded than Jane's, and her eventual marriage to an English squatter in Australia who has expressed his dislike of being corrected by educated women and who is bored by his female relatives and "their theory of the equality of the sexes" seems fitting (134).

[63] Ibid.

The issue of women's education and its relevance and importance is discussed in both *Clara Morison* and *Mr Hogarth's Will*, with the heroines in both novels receiving unconventional schooling. Clara has not "one accomplishment of marketable value" according to her uncle, who is keen to offload the expense of keeping her:

> She neither played, nor sung, nor drew, but she read aloud with exquisite taste; her memory was stored with old ballads and new poems; she understood French, and was familiar with its literature, but could not speak the language; she could write short-hand, and construe Caesar's Commentaries; she played whist and backgammon remarkably well, but she hated crochet and despised worsted-work (2).

As Frederick Sinnett, who also noted that *Clara Morison* was "decidedly the best Australian novel that we have met with," observes in *The Fiction Fields of Australia* (1856), Clara "is not possessed of any considerable store of young lady's accomplishments, and the more sterling kinds of knowledge are in this age and generation, lamentably unsaleable when packed up in petticoats."[64] By contrast, her sister, Susan, is less attractive than Clara but "her voice was exquisitely musical, her manners graceful and refined, and every accomplishment which she had cultivated was thoroughly acquired; she was a skilful musician, she drew admirably, and she understood more than one foreign language" (1). Recalling the ironic style of Jane Austen, Spence indicates her awareness of the use of such women as a source of cheap labour, to be exploited in the name of doing one's duty: "Mr Morison felt that she would be an excellent governess for his family, and rejoiced in the idea that he was able to do all his duty by her" (1). The fact that she is so well-placed to take on the role of governess means, however, that she will remain subject to her uncle's will, unlike Clara or Jane. This example, in which "morally and intellectually inferior men are repeatedly contrasted with female superiority," is repeated throughout *Clara Morison*, as Helen Thomson observes, suggesting that the novel, "like so many nineteenth-century novels written by women, … is more searchingly subversive and critical of the patriarchal *status quo* than a casual reading might suggest."[65]

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[64] Frederick Sinnett, "The Fiction Fields of Australia," *Journal of Australasia* 1 (1856): 199, 203.

[65] Helen Thomson, ed., *Catherine Helen Spence* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1987), xv.

Spence also makes the point that equal education is insufficient to enable women to compete with men in the employment market while other inequalities exist in society. Jane and Alice's radical and eccentric uncle believed that with the same training as boys, girls would be just as capable. The absence of equality of opportunity, however, means that equality of education becomes less a path to freedom and independence than a source of frustration. With the limited alternatives open to her, Jane's education, which consisted of bookkeeping, Euclid (geometry and arithmetic), the classics, chemistry and mineralogy, is not empowering at all and limits her attractiveness to those men who want the kind of wife that Rosamond Vincy appears to be in *Middlemarch*. The power that Rosamond acquires through her command of womanly accomplishments ensures she is regarded as eminently marriageable, with Tertius Lydgate perceiving her to be "grace itself," as "perfectly lovely and accomplished," and "what a woman ought to be." [66] But Lydgate sees only what he is meant to see. Rosamond has been taught to dissemble so effectively that her power remains invisible, ensuring that the ideology of the angel in the house is not undermined, and that Lydgate retains his illusions.

Both Eliot and Spence employ the quest for the right to meaningful education and work by characters such as Jane and Dorothea in rendering them heroic but, their creators imply, as long as men are in control of the economy and the institutions that make up their world, their opportunities are limited. They have to persuade men to act on their behalf in order to fulfil their plans for such things as cottages for workers or proportional representation, not only because they lack economic and political power and presence, but also because they lack credibility as a result of their limited education. When women do receive a more rounded education, they come up against men like Brandon whose ego is offended by being corrected by a woman, or they have to endure being tagged as "unwomanly." If a woman manages to achieve financial independence as Dorothea has (albeit through inherited wealth), she is still unable to address social problems because it is mostly men who run the farms, who control parliament and who hire employees.

[66] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ch.11.

Generally speaking, for single women to achieve fulfilment of their plans, they must first persuade a man to their views, and then motivate him to act, possibly against the opinion of the majority.

The struggle for financial independence that characters such as Jane endure highlights the lack of real power available to middle-class women in the nineteenth century, but it is, nevertheless, "a form of resistance to distorting ideologies …."[67] After marriage, that resistance becomes more difficult to discern as the ideology that saw women's indirect influence as "natural" combined with married women's lack of legal autonomy, tend to push them into the background. Spence and Eliot demonstrate this through Jane and Dorothea's situations after their marriages to Francis and Ladislaw respectively. Francis, before marriage, sees that Jane's ambitions for him and her concern with abstractions only exist because "she had no husband to occupy her heart" (153). Her "affectionate and ardent nature," which is now occupied with "abstractions of public duty and social progress," could be channelled into marriage to him and, as his wife, she would have more chances of doing good "with his co-operation and sympathy" (153-4).[68]

Despite Francis' limited appreciation of Jane's ambitions, his character operates as a prototype of the "New Man." He is poetic, artistic and sensitive, able to see all Jane's best qualities; she is

> not the lovely, clinging, dependent girl who would look up to him for counsel and support [but] something better … than his fancy had ever painted. Her powers of sympathy had been increased by her knowledge; she was as just as she was generous … Whether he rose or fell in the world; whether he gained social influence or lost it … her foot would be planted firmly beside his; her insight and sympathy would heighten every enjoyment and fortify him for every trial … [S]o

[67] Judith Lowder Newton, *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), xvii.

[68] Despite the similarities between the descriptions of the two heroines, *Middlemarch* was written several years later than *Mr Hogarth's Will*, so Spence could not have read it, nor has any evidence come to light that Eliot read Spence's novel. According to Spence's autobiography, the latter was serialised in the *Weekly Mail* (which has not survived), the weekend paper of the Adelaide *Daily Telegraph*, as *Uphill Work*. It was published in three volumes by Richard Bentley in London in 1865, so it is possible that Eliot read it. Spence's novels never sold well, however, which was one of the reasons she turned to journalism.

> far as the soul looked through her eyes and breathed from her lips, she had a sort of beauty that did not weary any intelligent gazer …. (154).

Spence's utopianism is evident in these early novels through her creation not of ordinary men, but of heroes who "become ideal versions of masculinity."[69] Intelligent, sympathetic and sensitive, the type is frequently represented in Spence's novels through such characters as Allan Lindsay in *Hugh Lindsay's Guest*, Charles Reginald in *Clara Morison* and Kenneth Oswald in *Gathered In* (1881-2). Others, such as Robert North in *Tender and True* (1856), grow into the role, but they tend to be much less sympathetic characters than those who require education and experience to appreciate their women. Spence's New Men never approach the idealised asexual, sensitive and spiritual types of the New Woman novels of the late nineteenth century, such as Diavolo and the Tenor in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893);[70] they remain clearly masculine, although remarkably sympathetic to the women in their lives. Francis as a New Man expresses Spence's utopian vision. He believes that appealing to Jane's future happiness is insufficient to persuade her to marry him; he also has to convince her that "it was right that she should marry him," that it was "out of an aggregate of happy homes a happy people is composed" (154). The altruism of both Francis and Jane, combined with companionate marriage, provide the best chance of achieving the good society, according to Spence. Nevertheless, there is a price to be paid by women. Just as Dorothea achieves fulfillment of her ambition for "wifely devotion" through her marriage to Will Ladislaw, so Jane becomes "absorbed into the life of another" through marriage and motherhood. Their creators' visions of the future are similar but the optimistic tone of the conclusion of Spence's novel contrasts strongly with the compromise of Eliot's conclusion in which Dorothea's "full nature … spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth" (Finale).

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[69] Bruce Bennett, "Review of *Clara Morison* (1971) and *Catherine Spence* by Janet Cooper," *Australian Literary Studies* 6, no. 2 (1973): 222.

[70] For a discussion of the "New Man" see Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992).

This difference in tone reflects Spence's representation of marriage in her novels as a less disempowering experience for women than it is in Eliot's. Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda* makes the mistake of assuming that marriage will endow her with the power she believed she wielded as a single woman during her flirtations with the men surrounding her, and before the family's financial and social position deteriorated. Marriage to a wealthy member of the aristocracy was supposed to endow wives with the reflected power of their husbands but Grandcourt actually allows her no power at all. By accepting his proposal knowing of his adulterous affair with Lydia Glasher and the existence of their children, she has renounced the moral superiority that was held to be one of the bases of sexual difference and women's power in the nineteenth century; she becomes morally ambivalent, a fact that she is well aware of and which causes her to be so dependent on Deronda's opinion of her. By denying Gwendolen the right to assume women's supposedly "natural" moral superiority, Eliot suggests that, like the notion of indirect influence, it is not so natural after all. This is a position supported by her 1855 essay, "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft," in which she argues that asserting women's equality - "nay, even their moral superiority to men" - is a false position because "if it were true, then there would be a case in which slavery and ignorance nourished virtue, and so far we should have an argument for the continuance of bondage."[71]

Both Spence and Eliot, in highlighting the limited scope of women's indirect influence, demonstrate the lack of real power available to nineteenth-century middle-class women even when they do possess some economic independence. Marriage is an alternative option but as the experience of Eliot's and Spence's heroines indicates, it can diminish women in one way or another. As Judith Lowder Newton argues, possessing indirect influence "was made contingent upon the renunciation of such self-advancing forms of

[71] George Eliot, "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft" (1855), in *George Eliot: Selected Critical Writings*, ed. Rosemary Ashton , 185. It is unlikely that Spence read and reviewed Eliot's essays in their original form as she did not take up this kind of journalism until the 1870s and by then, Eliot was writing her novels. In any case, I have been unable to locate any evidence that Spence read her essays, although she discusses her poetry in the longer articles on Eliot.

power as control or self-definition."[72] In taking the form of influence, women's abilities and identities could become devalued, a result that women themselves were often complicit in.

If Eliot doubted the notion of women's moral superiority, she did agree that there were innate differences between men and women. In the final few lines of her essay on Madame de Sablé in which she calls for knowledge and truth to be just as accessible to women as they are to men, she expresses the complementary natures of men and women:

> Let the whole field of reality be laid open to woman as to man, and then that which is peculiar in her mental modification, instead of being, as it is now, a source of discord and repulsion between the sexes, will be found to be a necessary complement to the truth and beauty of life. Then we shall have that marriage of minds which alone can blend all the hues of thought and feeling in one lovely rainbow of promise for the harvest of human happiness.[73]

This passage goes some way towards clarifying Eliot's often puzzling attitudes to the Woman Question. Men and women were inherently different in Eliot's thinking, with women possessing an "exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness, possible maternity suffusing a woman's being with affectionateness, which makes what we mean by the feminine character."[74] Contrary to being socially constructed, the characteristics of gender were as "natural" as the difference between the light from the sun in the morning and at noon:

> A certain amount of psychological difference between man and woman necessarily arises out of the difference of sex, and instead of being destined to vanish before a complete development of woman's intellectual and moral nature, will be a permanent source of variety and beauty, as long as the tender light and dewy freshness of morning affect us differently from the strength and brilliancy of the mid-day sun.[75]

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[72] Newton, *Women, Power, and Subversion*, 4.

[73] George Eliot, "Woman in France: Madame De Sablé" (1854), in *George Eliot: Selected Critical Writings*, ed. Rosemary Ashton, 68.

[74] Letter to Emily Davies, 1868, quoted in Flint, "George Eliot and Gender", 163.

[75] Eliot, "Woman in France: Madame De Sablé", 38.

Just as there were apparent inconsistencies in George Eliot's attitude towards the Woman Question, and contradictions within mid-Victorian feminism more generally, Spence sets up feminist arguments and characters that are, at times, contradictory. Like George Eliot, Spence apparently rejected the mid-Victorian notion of women's moral superiority but there are inconsistencies in the representation of her views. In *Tender and True*, for example, Rose has refused to marry Miles Davanent on the grounds that he has seduced and discarded a young woman named Lizzie. She argues that the appropriate moral behaviour would be to marry Lizzie to "restore her respectability" and prevent their son from entering the world "nameless and unregarded."[76] As Lizzie has already been married off, Davanent pleads with the pure and innocent Rose not to "throw me back upon all the world of temptations you alone can save me from. You shut me out from the only hope that could make me aspire to heaven" (233). Rose rejects the idea that she can cause him to reform: men would have to redeem themselves by other means. A few pages later, however, a tearful Rose is describing the scene with Davanent to Robert North and says, "But … I have done him no good, only harm. There is a man who loved me very much, and whom I did think I had it in my power to influence for good …" (235). Even with male support and encouragement, even intelligent strong-minded women find it difficult to escape the ideology of the angel in the house.

Spence's attitude towards sexual difference was based less on the notion of inherent differences between men and women than on the impact of society on the construction of those differences, similar to the basis for Eliot's analogy with slavery. As well as recounting in *Mr Hogarth's Will* the constructed nature of the arguments about the impossibility of women doing men's work,[77] Spence occasionally noted in her journalism how men and women display different qualities based on their experiences in society and the expectations of that society. For example, in an article entitled "Individuality" she writes:

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[76] Catherine Helen Spence, *Tender and True: A Colonial Tale* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1856), 2:229. All future references are to this edition.

[77] For details of this, see p. 79ff.

> …individuality, originality, or eccentricity is generally much more freely allowed to men than to women. Careless dress, outré style, bold or monopolizing speech are trifling blemishes in a man, but serious faults in a woman. The stronger sex are even pardoned the root fault of all - selfishness - for they have their way to make in the world; but a different standard is set up for women, who ought to devote themselves entirely to their families.[78]

In an 1881 article, she observes that "the fact in South Australia, as in all the world, is that the women are very much what the men make them, and the demands of the society in which she lives form the manners and guide the intelligence of the young girl." What is natural and what is acquired become a little confused at times, even within the same article: "happily this root of all evil [selfishness] is rarer among women than their male critics of all times and all races have been willing to allow … The contrary virtues of generosity, tenderness, and patience are naturally stronger with women than with men who have much hard knocking about in the world."[79]

The result of such expectations could lead to considerable frustration among women, depicted in nineteenth-century fiction through characters such as Dorothea after her marriage to Casaubon in *Middlemarch* and the struggle which Jane Eyre undergoes after being proposed to by St John Rivers. Unable to express themselves via a vocation for either satisfying work or a happy marriage, women could sometimes suffer "the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty," condemned by Florence Nightingale in *Cassandra* for contributing to women's physical and mental decline, making invalids of many:

> The accumulation of nervous energy, which has had nothing to do during the day, makes them feel every night, when they go to bed, as if they were going mad, and they are obliged to lie long in bed in the morning to let it evaporate and keep it down.[80]

Such characters are rare in Spence's novels; in fact, there is only one invalid woman - Mrs Beaufort in *Clara Morison*, who suffers from "weak lungs" - and few who are

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[78] A Colonist of 1839, "Individuality," *Register*, 24 February 1879.

[79] A Colonist of 1839, "Unsociable Women," *Observer*, 8 October 1881.

[80] Florence Nightingale, *Cassandra* (1852), ed. (New York: The Feminist Press, 1979), 37.

psychologically damaged. Obviously, that "gentlewoman's oppressive liberty" is less of an affliction for Spence's characters, especially those who migrate to Australia.

Her novels suggest that colonial life, although restricting women's opportunities to some extent, provides a space in which women are both forced into earning a living and able to accept situations that might not have been possible in England, thus liberating them from invalidism. It is also possible, as James Hammerton suggests of distressed gentlewomen who migrated to Australia in the 1830s, that middle-class female migrants possessed "a degree of psychological resilience not previously thought to be realistic," although there were a few who suffered considerably from the whole experience.[81] Spence's orphaned heroines certainly seem to possess a high degree of physical and mental resilience, as well as other qualities that their creator seems to think necessary for success in a new country. In addition to possessing flexibility and strength of will, Clara Morison, for example, represents those qualities that make families like the Elliotts important to colonial society, according to Spence's mouthpiece, Margaret Elliott:

> I have always thought that such a family as ours forms a valuable element in colonial society; we came here not to make our fortunes and leave the colony forthwith, but to grow up and settle in it; we have all rather more than average abilities; we have had good principles instilled in us from early youth; we have all a deep feeling of our accountability to God for both our private and public conduct; we have all … a love for the country of our adoption, and a wish to serve it … (395).

Marriage between characters such as Clara and Charles, who may not have even met in England, enhances the positive effects of migration in Spence's fictional worlds. Their relationship is a new beginning in a colony still affected by the goldrush but seen by Margaret to be on the threshold of great change. A similarly optimistic outlook concludes *Mr Hogarth's Will* in which Jane and Francis have moved from England to Melbourne, a place that has grown "from a mere hamlet of rude huts to a handsome, paved, lighted,

[81] Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, 64. Hammerton describes the case of Frances Haydon, a governess who reluctantly emigrated to Australia in 1834-5 and who was admitted to hospital in Hobart showing "considerable imbecility of mind," after the voyage (p. 64). He also notes "the frequent contemporary references to the fact that governesses constituted the largest percentage of any occupation group in insane asylums" (p.64-5).

commercial city,"[82] where Francis is a successful businessman, and Jane maintains her interest in public matters as well as being a wife and mother.

The elements of compromise, loss and entrapment that surround Dorothea and Gwendolen's marriages are missing from Jane's marriage to Francis, where there is radiant happiness all round and all problems are successfully resolved; like Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester, "perfect concord is the result."[83] However, the question of what might have been does exist at the end of *Mr Hogarth's Will*. Jane believes that she could have been as successful as Francis, "if I had been a man," while Francis argues that she would most likely have "made a better figure in the world" than he because of her perseverance and energy.[84] Such a sacrifice is not even remotely suggested by Spence in *Clara Morison*. Clara is not a would-be reformer like Jane, so marriage to Charles causes no renunciation of broader ambitions. Clara's development, from an unwanted member of the Scottish urban middle class who is forced to make her own way in the world to a useful and valuable member of South Australia's colonial and educated middle class, results, as Fiona Giles argues, in her reaching "her final destination as an integrated Australian."[85] Like Jane, she possesses skills and attitudes which are rewarded by the limited power bestowed by economic independence, resulting in marriage for love and, presumably, happiness ever after.

That Spence does not see this type of ending as the only one possible for female happiness is indicated in her representation of independent and intelligent single women. Miss Thomson, for example, in *Mr Hogarth's Will*, is a "gentlewoman-farmer" not unlike Spence's own Aunt Margaret whom she described as "the most successful farmer in the country [sic] for 30 years."[86] Peggy Walker in the same novel is a kind-hearted laundress who takes in Jane and Alice, as well as caring for several orphaned nieces and nephews,

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[82] Spence, *Mr Hogarth's Will*, 333.

[83] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847), ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 476.

[84] Spence, *Mr Hogarth's Will*, 438.

[85] Giles, *Too Far Everywhere*, 42.

[86] Spence, *Autobiography*, 11.

and represents an ideal kind of colonist from the working classes. Together with the intellectual Margaret Elliott, Clara Morison's newly-discovered cousin, they succeed, "despite a social system stacked against them, one which added insult to injury by its derogation of the 'spinster' …"[87]

Closely resembling Spence herself, Margaret is a serious young woman, whose "eyes were never timidly cast down, but bravely looked the whole world in the face, with a steady truth in them which demanded nothing less than truth in return" (160). She bears philosophically her reputation in the colony as a "blue," is able to discuss the work of poets and philosophers, novelists and historians with ease and has no hesitation in offering her opinions on politics, economic matters or the law. Margaret realises that she would find it difficult to work in traditional women's jobs, given her inability to rein in her opinions. In fact, she frequently acts as a mouthpiece for Spence who uses her to condemn the many restrictions on intellectual women. Reacting to an attack by Mr Dalton, a curmudgeonly old colonist, on learned ladies, for example, Margaret responds with:

> I believe it is the rule that, though a lady may strain all her accomplishments to the utmost, singing her very loudest, and playing her very strongest before gentlemen - though she may display her masterpieces in drawing, in painting, in embroidery, and even in crochet, to the most mixed society; - yet, if she has thought out a subject, she must not communicate it, - and she must let her faculties rust from want of the brightening which mind exerts over mind; and must habitually talk below herself, lest she should be supposed to arrogate either equality to the lords of creation, or perhaps superiority over them (261-2).

The need for women to hide any evidence of intellectual activity or of holding strong opinions, discussed in chapter one, was a problem close to Spence's heart. Eliot, too, reveals her feelings on the subject through satire in *Middlemarch* when she notes in relation to Dorothea that "women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them" (ch.1). While Spence and Eliot were able to publicly display their

[87] Helen Thomson, Introduction to *Mr Hogarth's Will* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988), xvi.

own intellectual abilities as they grew older and their careers progressed, mid-nineteenth-century Australia was still very similar to mid-Victorian Britain in its attitudes to women who had a reputation for being "blue." Indeed, Margaret Elliot is subject to some ridicule when one of the young women at a social gathering "point[ed] sarcastically to a blue riband which Margaret wore around her neck, and ask[ed] if she were not particularly fond of that colour" (261).

Marriage as an alternative vocation to paid work is given a more romantic treatment by Spence than by Eliot. As noted earlier, Clara Morison and Jane Melville are subjected to finales typical of the nineteenth-century romance novel in which marriage is the resolution of the heroine's quest. This kind of resolution is representative of Spence's optimistic outlook on life and is probably the most unrealistic element in her novels, apart from the occasional coincidence, such as the discovery of Clara's Scottish cousins living next door to her in Adelaide (recalling Jane Eyre's discovery of her Rivers cousins and other providential plotting not unusual in nineteenth-century novels). This positive view about the institution of marriage was reflected in much of Spence's journalism as well, but it was not the result of Spence being married. Having rejected her first marriage proposal at the age of seventeen because of "the Calvinistic creed that made me shrink from the possibility of bringing children into the world with so little chance of eternal salvation," and the second at twenty-three to a much older man with three children for unknown reasons, she remained single all her life.[88] This was an unusual choice in the 1840s and 1850s, as Susan Magarey notes, in a society whose settlement had been based on the migration of families and men and women of eligible age, and because of the connotations that spinsterhood carried with it.[89] In her autobiography, Spence claims that,

[88] Spence, *Autobiography*, 19. The first proposal obviously occurred prior to her conversion to her Unitarianism. Regarding the second proposal, Susan Magarey suggests that two of Spence's novels provide possible reasons for her rejection of John Alexander Gilfillan. Firstly, in *Clara Morison*, Margaret Elliott rejects a proposal from a man "who thought she had a noble soul, and remarks scornfully that she did not think that much of a reason for marriage." Secondly, in *The Author's Daughter*, several characters regard as "unnatural" the prospect of the heroine, Amy, marrying the old aristocrat, Lord Darlington, suggesting "that Spence recognised the importance of sexual compatibility in domestic harmony, and considered it impossible if there was a great difference in the ages of the partners." Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 45.

[89] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 44.

being "both imaginative and affectionate," she needed to keep a watch over herself: "I did not want to give my heart away. I did not desire a love disappointment, even for the sake of experience." In her later years, she expressed no regret at having never married: "…although I often envy my friends the happiness they find in their children, I have never envied them their husbands."[90]

The kind of companionate marriages that Spence promoted in her novels possibly assisted in changing perceptions about the role and nature of women, if we accept Jane Lewis's argument that being a "companion" implied a degree of equality that replaced the Victorian image of woman as the "angel in the house."[91] There is a suggestion of inequality in that Clara Morison would be doing more of the giving than her husband when Margaret Elliott observes that Clara's vocation is marriage: "you are formed to make some good man very happy … All your little talents are pleasure-giving; you have feeling, and taste, and tact …." (214). However, there is a difference between the marriage that Clara enters into with Charles and the one that Dorothea embarks upon with Ladislaw, even at this early stage of Spence's writing. Clara "had all that her heart desired … she was the companion, the friend, the counsellor of her husband" while Charles "rested in consciousness of entire happiness" (407). There is little of that second-best feeling that George Eliot leaves the reader with at the end of *Middlemarch*. Clara has become an ideal colonist in her acquisition of useful skills that are a worthy adjunct to her literate, intelligent mind, and in her willingness to turn her hand to any task, a quality necessary in building a new colony. In Clara's and Charles' companionate marriage based on love, the likeness of minds and natures, and industriousness, Spence revises the Victorian model of marriage and its counterpart in nineteenth-century romance novels, albeit in a colonial environment. As Rosalind Smith argues, Spence "presents a model of ideal colonial middle-class marriage based upon personal compatibility and a commonality of labour … in contrast to the economic considerations represented as

[90] Spence, *Autobiography*, 19,85.

[91] Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change*, 77.

underpinning English middle-class marriage."[92] It is worth noting that her critique of the economic basis of marriage pre-dates those English novels such as *Middlemarch* which were beginning to question the institution of marriage more seriously during the 1870s and 1880s, giving rise to the full-blown critique by New Woman novelists of the 1890s.[93]

Spence emphasises the undesirable nature of marriage for economic reasons through the character of Clara's nemesis, Miss Withering. She represents the opposite of the ideal colonist with her constant complaining and her condescending and arrogant attitudes towards those she perceives as lower in class. Recently arrived from England, she views Australia as inferior in several respects, from its climate and scarcity of good servants to its inattentive gentlemen and the general lack of manners. When Minnie Hodge, a young colonist who is bright, cheerful and egalitarian, argues that love should be the only excuse for marriage, Miss Withering (who is aptly named) scorns such an idea and seems to be uttering the thoughts that Rosamond Vincy might have:

> You do not mean to say that circumstances, position, and connexions are to be overlooked … I think it a very impertinent proposal when a young gentleman offers a young lady an inferior home, fewer comforts and a lower position, all merely to gratify a selfish feeling, which he dignifies by the name of love (132).

Like Rosamond and that other Eliot character who has the "power to wither patriarchs,"[94] Aunt Glegg in *The Mill on the Floss*, Miss Withering is less concerned with romantic notions of love than with such practical aspects as the standard of the conjugal home and its contents, her husband's financial stability and fortune, the state of his gig and the contents of his will, indeed all of those material elements of life that contributed to female respectability and status. When Minnie points out the hypocrisy of a society in which it is considered "ladylike to laugh at love, and even to despise it," but "unladylike to feel it, to honour it, or to speak of it with earnestness," Miss Withering is shocked at the idea that Minnie does not "care for being thought to be a lady" (134).

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[92] Smith, "*Clara Morison*: The Politics of Feminine Heterotopia," 45.

[93] Such New Woman novels include Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) and *The Beth Book* (1897), and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

[94] Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 8.

Self-sacrifice for women is just as unattractive in Spence's writing as marriage for materialistic reasons. The realistic interlude in Spence's utopian novel, *Handfasted* ([1879], 1984), in which the founder of the utopian colony of Columba describes her unhappy marriage and the rationale it provided for her idea of trial marriages, makes it clear that duty is not a sound basis for marriage. Raised according to principles of "passive obedience and submission to intellectual and spiritual devotion" (159), Margeurite accedes to her parents' wishes that she marry a man she does not love. Her husband, Archibald Keith, is a conservative clergyman in the Scottish Church who is intolerant, narrow-minded and bad-tempered. He burns Margeurite's books, appropriates her dowry to pay a family debt and displays no love towards her or their children. The lesson that "self-renunciation does not lead to happiness or even blessedness" is hard-learned, but is one particularly relevant to women:

> It was hard to be a woman; to have no will of one's own and no career, to bear children in sorrow into a world which was all thorns and briars for tender feet, all stabs and blows for loving hearts, was no enviable lot ….[95]

Marguerite expresses the suffering caused by the kind of self-renunciation that makes Casaubon appear to Dorothea Brooke "as a sort of enabling angel," and which Jane Eyre envisages for herself should she marry St John Rivers: "…at his side always, always restrained, and always checked - forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital …"[96]

In *Tender and True*, Spence explores another unhappy marriage, with Mary North feeling unappreciated and unloved by her husband, Robert. After several years of marriage, Mary's submissiveness and deference to Robert North combined with his stubborn, possessive and inconsiderate nature have led her to realise that a happy marriage requires more than an assumption of complementary natures eventually merging into "entire

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[95] Spence, *Handfasted*, 176.

[96] Kathleen Blake, *Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature: The Art of Self-Postponement* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), 34; Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 433.

union," with lives "like a calm river of pure and tranquil happiness"(1:137); honesty, trust and sympathy are essential. North believes that a husband and wife should complement each other, with their natures eventually merging and aspiring to a "glorious hope of immortality" (1:93). Like Casaubon in *Middlemarch*, he believed that after marriage, Mary would, "of course, follow her husband's opinions; she was just the loving pliant woman he had hoped to meet, and to bend to his will" (1:52). Mary seems to agree, regarding her marriage vows as binding her to his will: "your will is my law" (1:123).

A range of views about the nature of marriage are expressed by the novel's characters. Edward Trench, for example, suggests that a happy marriage is more likely to result if the woman yields to her husband than if she makes constant demands. He also subscribes to the notion of women's moral superiority, believing that marriage to Mary would have made him an altogether better person, morally, emotionally and spiritually. Rose, Mary's intellectual sister, also appears to accept traditional views about marriage, wanting a husband who will "form and improve [her] character," and to whom she can be "utterly subservient" (2:68) while Edward Mansfield, the man she eventually marries after first rejecting him, thinks that a husband and wife should "grow to each other by sympathy, by habit, and by religion" (2:67). Edward, whose ideas about marriage seem to most closely resemble Spence's own, refers to marriage as "God's holiest institution, man's best consolation for the loss of Paradise" (1:257). The villain of the novel, Miles Davanent, has a shopping list of requirements in a wife: "beauty that would not grow coarse, a mind capable of improvement, and a heart capable of undying love" (2:173). Rose gradually realises that her ideas about marriage were mistaken; if a wife is unaware of her husband's grand projects and he has no respect for her domestic activities, eventually

> the loving girl finds a strange blank in her heart. She is not the companion of his thoughts … Perhaps the wife remains placid and contented; perhaps she occupies herself with her children and her household; but, in nine cases out of ten, I think she leads only half a life, and is only half as happy as she would be with a more congenial helpmate, who thought his wife's opinion worth asking, and his wife's love worth trying to keep … (2:305-6).

Spence observed the distinct difference between marriage in the kind of novel that she had been writing in the mid-nineteenth century and its representation in the New Woman novels of the fin-de-siècle:

> Formerly our English lady novelists were satisfied if after sufficient entanglements and difficulties … and all dangers of fire, flood, and sword, the virtuous lovers were married in the last chapter. Now the old last chapter is often taken for the first, and it is not so clear to this generation of fiction writers that marriage is a satisfactory end or an end at all to the career of any heroine.[97]

Spence could have been speaking of her own fictional "virtuous lovers," for she did not question that the patriarchal basis of marriage presupposed women's inequality until she wrote *Handfasted*. As James Hammerton observes, advocates of companionate marriage "argued less for legal equality than for a higher form of conjugal companionship founded on mutual restraint, forbearance and respect."[98] The notion of separate spheres exists just as much after the reconciliation of the Norths, for example, albeit tempered by some sympathy towards his wife on the part of North. The injunctions to women by English advice manuals to "suffer and be still"[99] were obviously taken to heart by Mary, but Spence makes her pay a price in the form of some temporary unhappiness for her passivity. North, too, when he concerns himself more with domestic life and takes a greater interest in his children, seems to heed the message of such manuals from later in the nineteenth century, which placed "greater stress on [the husband's] entry into domestic matters in a more supportive and intimate way, particularly in connection with the rearing of children."[100] Fin-de-siècle feminists such as Mona Caird, however, saw sweeping changes as necessary for marriage to be more equitable to women, including change to the social, religious and cultural practices that made it a source of suffering for women. When asked what could be substituted for the present system of marriage, Caird

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[97] [Catherine Helen Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "Why Do Women Wilt?", *Register*, 11 December 1889.

[98] A. James Hammerton, "Victorian Marriage and the Law of Matrimonial Cruelty," *Victorian Studies* 33 (1990): 270.

[99] See, for example, Sarah Ellis's *The Women of England* (1838), *The Daughters of England* (1842), *The Wives of England* (1843), *The Mothers of England* (1843), all published by Fisher, Son and Company.

[100] Hammerton, "Victorian Marriage," 281. Hammerton refers to a number of examples including William Landels, *The Marriage Ring: A Gift-Book for the Newly Married and for those Contemplating Marriage* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin, 1883) and *Woman, Her Position and Power* (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1870). See his footnote, p. 282.

responded that "the true answer is not single in its character, but manifold: it would lead the mind of the inquirer over the widest fields of history, of sociology, of science, of psychology …"[101] Reflecting views that were more typical of mid-century English feminists and novelists, Spence observed of Caird after the publication of *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) that "she has ability, but she wants balance and proportion, and often sins against good taste."[102]

Compared to Spence, George Eliot is more elusive on the subject of the ideal marriage in her novels. It is as if she cannot conceive that her characters can achieve the kind of relationship which she enjoyed with G.H. Lewes. There are clues, however, to how she sees happiness evolving in marriage, even if it is not the blissful union seen in the romance genre. Deronda and Mirah's marriage, for example, approaches a companionate relationship at the end of *Daniel Deronda* as the couple sets out on their quest for a Jewish homeland. In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea and Ladislaw are not divided, as Kate Flint notes, by "the separation of interests or … emotional power relations" [103] that is evident in Rosamond and Lydgate's marriage. Each of these two characters inhabits a world "of which the other knew nothing," a theme common to many of Eliot's fictional couples.[104]

Spence not only presents both traditional and feminist points of view on marriage in her romance-realist novels, but also on women's role more generally. In *Tender and True*, for example, Mary is conscious of "her right place as a woman: willing to learn but never

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[101] Mona Caird, *The Morality of Marriage and Other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Women* (London: George Redway, 1897), 5. Mona Caird's ideas about marriage are discussed in more detail in my honours thesis, "Sarah Grand and the Idea of the New Woman," University of Ballarat, 2000. Sally Ledger discusses the radical nature of Caird's essay, "Marriage," noting Caird's position on marriage as a relatively recent phenomenon, and "not necessarily a permanent or unmalleable institution." According to Ledger, Caird regarded the ideal of female virginity at the altar "as a post-Reformation, bourgeois phenomenon" like marriage, and the result of men's desire to possess a woman as property. See *The New Woman: Fiction and feminism at the fin de siecle*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 21. See also Lyn Pykett, "The Cause of Women and the Course of Fiction: The Case of Mona Caird", in *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature*, ed. Christopher Parker (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995).

[102] A Colonist of 1839, "Why Do Women Wilt?", *Register*, 11 December 1889.

[103] Flint, "George Eliot and Gender", 164.

[104] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ch.16.

presuming to teach …" while North, after unsuccessfully trying to help her improve her mind (at her request), argues that she is "infinitely charming as you are - more knowledge would only spoil you" (1:145, 46). The problem, however, apart from his condescending attitude towards his wife, is his inability to teach, which neither of them seems to recognise. Her inability to learn only reinforces her feelings of intellectual inferiority and his of superiority. He is enthusiastic in support of the idea of separate spheres which her failure to learn confirms as valid: "…we will each have our own sphere for the future. I will work, and think, and read, and look up now and then to your face, which is, after all, a beautiful commentary; and you will look after my house, and make me comfortable" (1:146).

All of this is at odds with Spence's early awareness of women's fitness "to share in the work of this world, and that to make the world pleasant for men was not their only mission."[105] The Norths' marriage becomes a metaphor for many of the problems faced by men and women in improving their relationships, although Spence declared the central theme of the book to be "the jealousy which husbands are apt to feel of their wives' relations[, a]s if the most desirable wife was an amiable orphan – if an heiress, so much the better."[106] Indeed, North's vision of his wife's capabilities is even more limited than John Ruskin's. Ruskin, in his "Of Queen's Gardens" essay which has been much maligned by twentieth-century feminists such as Kate Millett, recommended that women's minds be filled "with all knowledge and thoughts which tend to confirm its natural instincts of justice, and refine its natural tact of love … All such knowledge should be given to her to understand, and even to aid, the work of men."[107] Rose argues, on the other hand, that those writers such as Goethe, who represent women as absurdly gentle and loving and subordinating their minds and characters to those of men, are really

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See, for example, "Janet's Repentance" and "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Gwendolen and Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda*, Adam and Hetty in *Adam Bede.*

[105] Spence, *Autobiography*, 11.

[106] Ibid., 23.

[107] John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), ed. (London: George Allen, 1894), 110. See Kate Millett, "The Debate over Women: Ruskin Vs. Mill", in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

claiming that women have no character at all. Discussing this issue with a German scholar, she remarks that:

> [Goethe's fictional women] have a chameleon-like faculty of taking the hue of the character they attach themselves to, in so far as he is disposed to part with it, and a very poor colour they make of it. I believe women have distinct characters as well as men; we have minds to be cultivated, and souls to be saved, as well as you; and when a great writer, like Goethe or Byron, lends himself to the popular opinion that man's vanity leads him to entertain - that woman is intrinsically lesser and weaker, and, in fact, utterly valueless, without man, he does us a great wrong (2:53-4).

She goes on to say, however, that she is perfectly satisfied with women's position in England, apart from the problems they face in earning a living, and does not "stand up for the rights of women" (2:54). According to Rose, idealising women in literature denies them intellectual autonomy, yet she is happy for women to be restricted in many other aspects of their lives.

This inconsistency can be explained as a device for comparing Rose's earlier misguided views on women and marriage to her relatively more enlightened perspective by the end of the novel. Perhaps, too, Spence's early conservatism about women's rights is reflected in Rose's views, although it is likely that she would have been aware of events in Britain around this time which were highlighting many of the problems that women faced. Barbara Bodichon's pamphlet outlining women's invidious legal position in England had been published in 1854, for example, while Caroline Norton's battle for custody of her children and the right to keep her own income had received widespread publicity from the 1830s onwards.[108] Rose's views about marriage are far from radical by the end of the novel, even by mid-nineteenth-century standards, but she no longer wants a husband who is "far above me." Instead, she takes pleasure in the idea of a relationship that is more

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[108] Barbara Leigh Smith, "A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women," 1854. Extract in Murray, *Strong-Minded Women and Other Lost Voices from Nineteenth Century Britain*, 119-20. See also Sheila R. Herstein, *A Mid-Victorian Feminist: Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Re Caroline Norton, see Caine, *English Feminism*, 66-70. See also Margaret Forster, *Significant Sisters: The Grassroots of Active Feminism, 1830-1930* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

equal, feeling "perfect confidence" in Edward's "stature, mental as well as physical" (2:310).

In attempting to understand Spence's motivations, I am conscious of the problem of confusing the nature of author and character, and the fact that she presents so many different views on marriage in *Tender and True* makes it difficult to discern an authorial position. Twenty years later, she appeared to have moved away from her interest – financial or otherwise – in romance as a central theme in her novels, dismissing "those novels from female hands … in which the three volumes are filled with love quarrels and reconciliations … as false to real life" because love "is very far from being all life, or even any very great part of life …."[109] It certainly plays a less important role in the novels that she wrote from the 1870s onwards.

Spence was able to incorporate within the bounds of what became "an embarrassing subject" to Australian critics of the twentieth century, some discussion of the real social and psychological problems facing women.[110] According to Sheridan, "'romance' was a distinctively feminine genre … favoured by nineteenth-century women writers for addressing issues socially defined as feminine: the formation of proper womanliness, the organisation and maintenance of marriages, the role of middle-class family life in the development of colonial society."[111] Combining romance, described by Arnold Kettle as "above all, [about] idealised love,"[112] with the genre of domestic realism, provided a fictional opportunity for effectively raising feminist issues. When Spence discusses the problems that Jane Melville faces in finding fairly-paid employment, the arguments she has Jane use are indeed feminist, and the fact that Jane falls in love with Francis and becomes a wife and mother does not invalidate the feminism of these arguments. The

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[109] Spence, "George Eliot," 147.

[110] Regarding the lack of critical acceptance of nineteenth-century Australian romance writing, see Giles, "Romance: An Embarrassing Subject"; Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*.

[111] Sheridan, 1995 #114@36

[112] Arnold Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel* (1951), ed., 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Hutchinson, 1967), 31.

discussion between Rose and Edward, for example, about the Norths' marriage presents a form of dialectic about the creation of the ideal marriage. Edward's earlier rejection by Rose, her experience with Davanent and her observations about the Norths' marriage locate the novel within the genre of romance: her eventual marriage to Edward and the happy conclusion to the Norths' problems confirm this. But Edward's outline of the features of companionate marriage reflects the move towards equality within marriage which was on the feminist agenda in England.

Spence subverted traditional notions of women's nature and role through the presentation of alternatives to the ideology of separate spheres, using her own experience of what women could do, but also managing to conform to romance conventions. She shows single women in paid employment becoming happy wives and mothers, cared for by loving husbands and working together to create a comfortable home. Spence's heroines may not achieve greatness, but they do find happiness. She also creates single women such as Peggy Walker and Miss Thomson in *Mr Hogarth's Will*, who never marry but who continue to support themselves, living happy and independent lives. Spence's fictional married women do not take up paid work, not only because this was never part of her early agenda, but no doubt because it would also have diminished the romantic effect. It was possible too that Spence felt that married women were busy enough as wives and mothers, given the demands of life in a young colony and the shortage of domestic servants. In these early novels, Spence provides "a faithful transcript of life in the colony,"[113] while depicting idealised (albeit fairly passionless) love and companionate marriage. She supports traditional ideas of women as wives and mothers, but at the same time projects a vision of the future that presages her move towards utopian fiction. As Susan Magarey notes, "she drew on the conventions of both the popular romantic novel and the social purpose novel to shape and order her material,"[114] but more than this, she attempted to express her ideas about the perfectibility of human beings.

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[113] Letter to Smith, Elder, 1 August 1853, which accompanied the manuscript of *Clara Morison*. Quoted in Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 61.

[114] Susan Magarey, Introduction to *Clara Morison* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1994), v.

In this, Spence differs from the writer she admired so much, George Eliot. Eliot's realism restricts women to the sphere in which society would confine them but shows how little their lives become by being thus confined. At the same time she fails to depict women's reality by showing, for example, that there were many women engaged in satisfying, independent careers before and after marriage. Women such as Eliot herself and Barbara Bodichon continued to work after entering into long-term relationships - indeed, Eliot was the main breadwinner of the household, helping to support Lewes's family, as well as her own. She creates "monumental heroines" who are forced to accept how ordinary they are, with the implication of her "determined realist resistance to focusing on the extraordinary" being that none of her heroines is exceptional enough to live the life that she did; as George Levine notes, "only someone of genuinely heroic stature (one would have to infer, only someone as exceptional as Marian Evans herself) could have sustained and justified such a life."[115] But Eliot was also expressing her opinion as to what women's role should be - to remain attached to the family and the home, engaged in that "great amount of social unproductive labour which needs to be done by women …"[116]

The different approaches to the Woman Question by Spence and Eliot are indicative of their attitudes to society more generally. Spence imagines a world that is better than it has been, putting into prose form Aristotle's argument about poetry, that it is "valuable precisely because it shows men not simply as they are, but as they ought to be …"[117] Much later, Spence was to deprecate on the grounds of its pessimism the type of literature that portrayed Australia as a land of

> the deadbeat, the remittance man, the gaunt shepherd with his starving flocks and herd, the free selector on an arid patch, the drink shanty where the rouseabouts and shearers knock down their cheques, the race meeting where high and low, rich

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[115] "monumental heroines": Barrett, *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines*, 27.

Levine, "Introduction: George Eliot and the Art of Realism", 12.

[116] Letter from Eliot to Barbara Bodichon, Haigh IV, 425, 28? March 1868, quoted Karl, *George Eliot: A Biography*, 423.

[117] Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel*, 31.

> and poor, are filled with the gambler's spirit and cursed with the gambler's ill-luck. [118]

There was more to Australia than this kind of literature allowed, according to Spence, but "misfortune is more picturesque than prosperity."[119] She wanted literature to include "the joyousness of Australian life" and the "beauty and brightness of the world we live in" so that people could "see Australia steadily and see it whole."[120] For Spence, realism did not equate to "the acceptance of limitation" that George Eliot forced on her characters. In her utopian fiction, discussed in chapter three, Spence moves beyond the romance genre towards fantasy, yet retains elements of realism and romance. Perhaps, by this time, she realised that creating a better society required more changes than were possible in the here and now.

George Eliot, on the other hand, regarded it as the novelist's duty "to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind."[121] Her desire for truth and fidelity to life, her acceptance that realism necessarily means "that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms bred by imaginations on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality,"[122] meant rejecting the romantic and the utopian. And, at times, George Eliot does sidestep conventional romance as in her refusal to bring Gwendolen and Deronda together at the conclusion of *Daniel Deronda*. However, there is much in her description of Mirah and Deronda that evokes the nineteenth-century romance novel. Realism, in the sense that she is describing the ordinary and the "more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people, whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire …" is replaced by a quest narrative that is also a kind of fantasy, indicating in this, her last novel, that perhaps there is more to life than "a monotonous homely existence," that

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[118] [Catherine Helen Spence], "The Australian in Literature," *Register*, 22 November 1902, p. 6. Repr. Thomson, ed., *Catherine Helen Spence*, 492.

[119] Ibid., 492-3

[120] Ibid., 494.

[121] George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859), ed. (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), ch.17.

perhaps the world needs pictures of "cloud-borne angels, [of] prophets, sibyls and heroic warriors …"[123] Her description of Daniel and Mirah's relationship - "now she was glowing like a dark-tipped yet delicate ivory-tinted flower in the warm sunlight of content, thinking of any possible grief as part of that life with Deronda, which she could call by no other name than good"[124] - also reflects an optimism at distinct variance with the endings of her other novels, having much in common with the flowery optimism of the final few lines of her essay on Madame de Sablé quoted earlier. In fact, *Daniel Deronda* makes Spence's novels seems like thorough-going examples of the realist genre, as her happy couples settle down to a satisfying, industrious life on the farm (Clara and Charles), or lives devoted to helping develop a young colony (Jane and Francis). They are lives full of hope but they are quite ordinary lives.

Both Spence and Eliot addressed similar themes about women in their realist fiction, but their visions of how women could solve the problems they faced were very different. George Eliot's vast web of interconnecting relationships was the basis for her vision in which women generally compromised their desires or ended up dead like Maggie Tulliver. It is arguable whether or not this was because she saw women as unable to escape the expectations and ideology that enmeshed them in the social web or because she wanted to highlight the waste of women's lives caused by having to subsume their own desires to those of men and society. Eliot's social realism, in which society improves only gradually and in an evolutionary fashion without disturbing the fragile network of established relationships within communities, is non-utopian, reflecting the "imperfect social state" of the present as she perceived it, as well as her meliorist views about human improvement.

Spence, similarly, realised that the burden placed on women by society was a heavy one, limiting their potential for intellectual and vocational achievement as well as for

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[122] George Eliot, "John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, Vol. 3", in *George Eliot: Selected Critical Writings*, ed. Rosemary Ashton, 248.

[123] Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ch.17.

[124] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 727.

emotional happiness. Her vision, however, is not as bleak as George Eliot's. Her heroines generally end up marrying, but, rather than these marriages resembling the "mixed result" of Dorothea Brooke's marriage to Will Ladislaw, they approach the triumphalism of Jane Eyre's declaration, "Reader, I married him." The happily-ever-after scenario proves a little more elusive when the novel begins rather than ends with marriage, as in Spence's *Tender and True,* requiring a great deal of work by both parties to bring about happiness. She wrote in a combination of domestic and social realism and romance genres that was more utopian than meliorist, more hopeful and less open-ended than George Eliot's type of realism, enabling her to express her optimism for the future. Allowing her female characters greater scope for personal growth than Eliot, as well as a greater capacity to affect the men they care for and the society in which they live, Spence effectively deploys romance as a positive element in women's lives.

George Eliot agreed with the idea of equal access for women to education and employment opportunities but only insofar as women would complement men, leading ultimately to the benefit of the whole of society. Much less optimistic than Spence, George Eliot did not recognise in her fiction the possibility of women achieving the kind of life that she herself achieved. Dorothea's resignation and acceptance of marriage to Ladislaw are indicative of not only Eliot's pessimism about relationships between men and women, and about women's future, but also of her belief in the need for the individual to compromise and submit. Her deterministic philosophy, which emphasised the individual's formation partly by outside forces and partly by inherent gender differences, argued against the exercise of individualism, particularly by women, who needed to "subordinate [their] personal happiness to the social good."[125] She created exceptional female characters – "monumental heroines" – who are never able to transcend the limitations of their society or their own characters and whose grandeur makes their destinies so tragic. In so doing, Eliot moves away, as Dorothea Barrett argues, "from the Victorian model of virtue in women to her own more complex and

[125] Mathilde Blind, *George Eliot* (1888), 169, quoted in Flint, "George Eliot and Gender", 161. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

challenging concept of greatness in women."[126] The conclusions of her novels demonstrate how unready Eliot believed the world was to accept such women as they were, and how unable these heroines were to adjust to the world as it was.

The conclusions to Spence's novels, however faithful they may be to the conventions of romance novels, are also influenced by her attitudes towards Australia; she highlights the fact, as Helen Thomson observes, "that such happy endings were more likely in an egalitarian colonial setting where social mobility was the norm rather than the exception."[127] Spence's optimism about the possibilities of change for women in the fertile soil of the new world of nineteenth-century Australia, a world that was less bound by the traditions and restrictions of the past, did not blind her to the problems that existed, however. She saw how a better society would be the result of improvements for women, but this required that discrimination against women in so many areas of employment be ended. The right to financial independence for women who were not married or who wanted to marry for love was also necessary. Arguing for women's right to and need for access to a wider range of employment in many of her novels and in her journalism, she drew grim pictures of women who, for various reasons, were forced to earn a living and the difficulties they faced in a society that denied them access to employment other than "women's work." She constantly portrayed intelligent women frustrated by their inability to earn an income, and devised various ways of highlighting how marriage needed to change from an institution based on ideological and economic necessity to the companionate relationship she thought best suited to the individual's and society's interests. Resignation, acceptance and self-sacrifice were not doctrines subscribed to by Spence. While she perceived the enormous influence on women of the society in which they lived, she also held that the individual had great power in a young society. Ultimately, in these novels, Spence does not deny the value of patriarchal institutions such as family and marriage, but she does question particular aspects of how patriarchal society operates to women's – and society's – detriment, and offers her own vision of

[126] Barrett, *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines*, 27.

[127] Helen Thomson, Introduction to *Catherine Helen Spence*, xi.

how it might be better. In her utopian novels, discussed in the following chapter, she breaks away from many of the conventions of the romance genre and tries to envisage a society in which marriage still rules, but society functions without a sexual double standard.

Chapter 3 Women, Progress and Utopia

Catherine Spence was a utopian in the sense that she believed in the possibility that social and political change could produce a better society. She presented her utopian vision in her novels, her journalism and her sermons, but the most holistic representations of the good society occurred in her utopian fiction. In this chapter, I discuss Spence's conception of the relationship between the good society and the roles accorded to women as represented in her utopian fiction, comparing her depiction of the position and nature of women in utopia with the representation of women in the history of utopian thought, writing and experimentation more generally. This larger historical context will provide a framework for understanding Spence's approach to achieving progress for society through sexual and political equality for women and men. Focusing on the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the modern movement for the emancipation of women could be said to begin, will permit a better understanding of Spence's work in terms of her engagement with important intellectual streams of the nineteenth century such as feminism, the idea of progress, and utopianism, as well as its significance in Australian cultural history.

Spence's choice of the utopian genre reflects the popularity of utopian novels in the late nineteenth century, particularly in America and Britain, although utopian ideas have been a significant element of human political, social and cultural discourses since at least the time of Plato's *Republic*, and possibly from the ancient Egyptian era.[1] While some dreams of a better society have been nostalgic, such as those that hark back to a golden age of serenity and abundance where men "lived as if they were gods," others have been more playful, imagining rivers of oil, milk, honey and wine, and geese that "fly roasted on the spit."[2]

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[1] John Carey argues that the earliest surviving utopia is an ancient Egyptian poem, "The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor," from the period 1940-1640 B.C.E. The utopian elements that Carey perceives in the tale include a journey to an imaginary paradise island and a holy snake who "laughs at worldly riches and splendour," with the moral being one of "stoic endurance and self-control." John Carey, ed., *The Faber Book of Utopias* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 1.

[2] Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1979), 67; Pamela Neville-Sington and David Sington, *Paradise Dreamed: How Utopian Thinkers Have Changed the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), 5-6.

There have been utopias that were written to satirise contemporary societies, such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), sexually radical utopias such as the Marquis de Sade's *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir* (1795), Dennis Diderot's *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage* (1772, 1796) and Sarah Scott's *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762), scientific utopias, religious utopias, and politically and socially revolutionary utopias that were written as serious blueprints for the not-so-distant future. The early nineteenth century brought a lull in fictional utopias, but the excitement that had been generated by the French Revolution, although dampened somewhat by its excesses, was manifested in the plethora of utopian plans by men such as the utopian socialists, Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Henri Saint-Simon, and women like Frances Wright and Ann Lee who saw their ideas as much more than dreams.[3]

The meaning of the word "utopia" is difficult to pin down precisely, as the concept has acquired many connotations since Thomas More first coined it as the title of his satirical novel, *Utopia*, in 1516. These extra layers of meaning have stemmed from the implicit complexity of More's pun on the Greek for "no place" (*outopia*) and "good place" (*eutopia*), raising the issue of the achievability of any given utopia. This ambiguity has burdened the term with the sense of impracticability that the everyday definition of "utopian" has acquired. Many utopian scholars have attempted to define the term but I hope to avoid some of the difficulties and complexities associated with this task by using it in a broad sense to include those ideas that express a desire for social and political change which an individual believes will lead to a better society than the one in which they are

[3] Primary sources on the utopian socialists include Charles Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements* Gareth Stedman-Jones and Ian Patterson, trans. Ian Patterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Robert Owen, "A New View of Society" (1813/14), in *A New View of Society and Report to the County of Lanark*, ed. V.A.C. Gatrell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970); Henri Saint-Simon, *Selected Writings on Science, Industry and Social Organisation* Keith Taylor, trans. Keith Taylor (London: 1975).

Secondary references include J.F.C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Quest for the New Moral World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969); Frank E. Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); Keith Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1982).

For information on Wright, Lee and other women communitarians, see Darby Lewes, *Dream Revisionaries: Gender and Genre in Women's Utopian Fiction* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1995), ch.2; Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984).

currently living.[4] When one considers that this might include texts such as *Mein Kampf*, perhaps a further qualification is necessary as Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor suggest - that to qualify as utopian, the ideas should aim to benefit everyone in a society, although not necessarily to the same degree.[5]

Spence's use of the utopian genre also highlights her ability to take on board and refashion the contributions of a range of thinkers and reformers in order to express her vision of how society was to progress. Spence's belief in the possibility of progress for society related to the possibility of progress by the individual, and a logical extension of this was the notion that if women could be raised from the subordinate position which they generally occupied in relation to men in the nineteenth century, then society would improve.[6] In her utopian novel, *Handfasted*, written in the late 1870s but not published until 1984, is contained her most clearly articulated feminist vision.[7] In it, she explores the way relationships between men and women might change with the removal of the sexual double standard, harking back to the utopian socialists of the early nineteenth century and those utopian thinkers who have wanted to alter the institution of marriage. The reader is introduced to Columba, a utopian colony in Central America settled by Scottish emigrants in the mid-eighteenth century, through the experiences of the hero, Hugh Keith, a traveller from nineteenth-century Australia.The settlers have modified the social, cultural and legal institutions they left behind to enable them to adapt to their new environment. One of the most significant changes in Columba is the introduction of the practice of handfasting, in which men and women can live together for a year and a day without entering into legal marriage. This may

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[4] For some definitions of utopia, see, among others, Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (New York: Philip Allan, 1990); Lyman Tower Sargent, "Utopian Traditions: Themes and Variations", in *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*, ed. Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys, and Lyman Tower Sargent (New York/Oxford: The New York Public Library/Oxford University Press, 2000); Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1979).

[5] Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1982), 18.

[6] The idea of progress in nineteenth-century Britain and Australia is discussed in its wider implications in chapter 5.

[7] For information about the publication of *Handfasted*, see Helen Thomson, Preface to *Handfasted*, ix, and "Comment," *Overland* 98 (April 1985): 63.

have been a radical notion for nineteenth-century Australia, but it was based, as Rosemary O'Grady observes, on "an impeccable source: Sir Walter Scott and the pre-Reformation practice of betrothal in Scots parishes where one rarely saw a priest because of the isolation and a shortage of clergy."[8]

Spence describes a less gender-focused version of progress in the novella, *A Week in the Future*,[9] which owed more to the revival of utopian fiction in the late nineteenth century begun by Edward Bellamy, American philosopher and socialist, with his *Looking Backward* (1888) than to feminist utopias or radical politics. Spence's second utopian work was serialised in volume one of the *Centennial Magazine* (1888-9), and was published as a novella in 1987. Like Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Spence's work features a traveller who mysteriously appears a hundred years in the future, and whose education in the ways of the new world reveals the changes that have taken place. Unlike *Looking Backward*, the traveller is a mature single woman from nineteenth-century Adelaide (closely resembling Spence), and there is no romance to distract from the serious discussions about the details of life in 1988 England. Each day of the week is devoted to a particular aspect of society, with Emily Bethel providing the comparisons to the nineteenth century.

A Week in the Future lacks the imaginative power of *Handfasted* but Spence makes effective use of the utopian genre to adapt Jane Hume Clapperton's ideas as expressed in *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness* (1885) into fictional form. *Scientific Meliorism* was itself derived, as Lesley Ljungdahl notes, "from the moral ideas of George Eliot, the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and the philosophical beliefs of Herbert Spencer …."[10] Eliot is credited with the coining of the term "meliorist," although it is possible that the word was in use prior to Eliot's usage of it.[11] Edith Simcox recalled in an

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[8] Rosemary O'Grady, "Slowly, Tying the Knot with Care," *Advertiser* (1984): 37.

[9] *A Week in the Future* was serialised in Sydney in the *Centennial Magazine* from December 1888 to July 1889.

[10] Lesley Durrell Ljungdahl, Prologue to *A Week in the Future*, 9.

[11] Clapperton notes in her preface two occasions on which Eliot used the word. In a letter to James Sully of 19 June 1877, recorded in John Cross's *George Eliot's Life* (1885), Eliot writes "I don't know that I ever heard

article on Eliot in the *Nineteenth Century* that "to a friend who once playfully called [Eliot] optimist she responded, 'I will not answer to the name of optimist, but if you like to invent Meliorist, I will not say you call me out of my name.'"[12] For Eliot, the term meliorism (from the Latin *melior*, meaning better) best represented her view that the world could be made better by human effort, mediating between optimism and pessimism. A more recent philosophical definition argues that it is "a term given to that view of the world which believes that at present the sum of good exceeds the sum of evil and that, in the future, good will continually gain upon evil."[13] Like Spence, Clapperton was a great admirer of Eliot and writes in the preface in words similar to those used by Spence in her 1876 *Melbourne Review* article about Eliot: "…had she not lived, my mind must, under the action of other formative influences, have shown a different result…"[14] While she never met Eliot, she was familiar with some of her circle, and she and Spence spent several days together visiting places and people associated with Eliot during Spence's visit to England in 1893-4.

Both of Spence's utopian texts provide a way of exploring the intellectual influences that might have contributed to Spence's views about relationships between men and women at a time of intense public debate over the Woman Question. As noted in chapter one, Spence drew on the ideas of a range of individuals such as John Stuart Mill and George Eliot, many of whom contributed in different ways to the nineteenth-century public discourse surrounding the nature and role of women. What Mill's feminism, Eliot's meliorism, and the ideas of many earlier thinkers had in common was the notion that maintaining women in a position of ignorance and subordination was destructive to the progress of society. The path to a better society was to be found through the amelioration, to a greater or lesser degree, of women's knowledge and position. Spence advocated such improvements in ways

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anybody use the word 'meliorist' except myself. But I begin to think that there is no good invention or discovery that has not been made by more than one person." Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism*, vii-viii.

[12] Edith Simcox, "George Eliot," *Nineteenth Century*, May 1881.

[13] *1911 Encyclopedia* (2002-3 [sighted 6 August 2004]); available from http://26.1911encyclopedia.org/M/ME/MELIORISM.htm.

[14] Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism*, ix.

that were sometimes radical, resembling Charles Fourier's ideas about sexual equality, and sometimes relatively conservative, closer to a number of the mid-Victorian feminists.[15]

The idea of progress tends to be ideologically inflected by such factors as socio-economic status, gender, nationality, race and class. Thus, a range of views have existed about the nature of progress and whether or not it has implications for the role and status of women, depending on the individual and their ideology. A white middle-class male in nineteenth-century England, for example, could conceivably see absolutely no progress for society in the achievement by women of economic independence, improved education or the right to vote. Women, too, could be anti-feminist and still believe in the progress of society. Eliza Lynn Linton, who had a long career as a novelist and journalist, as well as being a dogged anti-feminist, saw increasing demands by women and girls for autonomy as leading to a worse society. The rise of the New Woman in late nineteenth-century England would, according to Linton, "in obliterating the finer distinctions of sex, [obliterate] the finer traits of civilisation," with "every step made towards identity of habits…a step downwards in refinement and delicacy - wherein lies the essential core of civilisation."[16]

As noted above, some thinkers in the nineteenth century and earlier gauged a society's progress, however, by the degree to which its women were emancipated. The Enlightenment had been one such period. Theories about the development of society were widely considered during the eighteenth century with a number of philosophers seeking "to understand and to write a history of women, and of changing gender roles, as one part of their attempt to construct a science of humanity for their own day."[17] In attempting to connect women's position to the state of progress of society, they argued for the existence of a link between primitive societies and women's subordinate position; Dennis Diderot, *philosophe* and encyclopaedist, for example, argued that "if women are subjugated in civilised nations, they are under complete oppression in savage nations and in all barbarous

[15] For discussion of mid-Victorian feminist views, see p. 38ff.

[16] Eliza Lynn Linton, "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents," *Nineteenth Century* 30 (1891): 597.

[17] Jane Rendall, Introduction to *The History of Women from Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time*, ed. Jane Rendall (Chippenham: Thoemmes Press, 1995), v.

regimes. Entirely occupied with meeting his needs, the savage has time only for his safety and subsistence."[18] William Alexander, a Scottish physician and philosopher, wrote a history of women which, Jane Rendall argues, "deserves to take its place among Enlightenment histories of civil society."[19] In it, he specifically relates women's freedom to society's progress:

> We shall almost constantly find women among savages condemned to every species of servile, or rather, of slavish drudgery; and shall as constantly find them emerging from this state, in the same proportion as we find the men emerging from ignorance and brutality; the rank, therefore, and condition, in which we find women in any country, mark out to us with the greatest precision, the exact point in the scale of civil society, to which the people of such country have arrived…[20]

Such arguments presupposed that the time in which these philosophers lived was most definitely better for women, having progressed from the past when women were "intended solely to propagate and nourish the species," to the present when they helped

> to form us [that is, men] for society, to give an elegance to our manners, a relish to our pleasures, to soothe our afflictions, and to soften our cares. Of all the various causes which influence our conduct, our feelings, and our sentiments, none operate so powerfully as the society of women.[21]

This view of women as the moral guardians and refining influence on men was not so different from the popular nineteenth-century representation of women as the "angel in the house," but the fact that these men could at least associate women's emancipation with the progress of society was progress itself.

The notion that improving women's lives will lead to a better society dates back as far as Plato's *Republic*, which was an exposition of a state in which women would participate equally in education and occupations "on the ground that there is no fundamental difference between the sexes as would justify their present division of occupation, enabling the whole

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[18] Diderot, c. 1772, quoted in Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," 110.

[19] Rendall, Introduction, v.

[20] William Alexander, *The History of Women from Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time* (1782), quoted in Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," 110.

[21] William Alexander, *The History of Women from Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time* (Thoemmes Press, 1995 [sighted 29 May 2004]); available from http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/book-sum/w_alex.html.

state to benefit from the capabilities of all citizens."[22] Women are regarded as weaker than men in general, but it is the nature of the individual which is of overriding importance; there is nothing "better for a city than that it should contain the best possible men and women."[23] The opportunity for this relative equality between men and women is provided through such radical concepts as the abolition of the family, possessions and property; a communal lifestyle; and equality of education, all aspects of the quest for a better society that reappear in later, more distinctively and firmly feminist texts.[24] Between Plato and the late eighteenth century, however, there was little discussion about the role of women in utopia.

Not all utopian thinkers were silent on the subject, however, with several discussing women's biological role as mothers in utopia. The classical Greek city-states' attempts at constitution-building, for example, were less concerned with the individual than with the good of the state, so that the idea of eugenic breeding to produce the best possible citizens meant that the notion of allowing unhealthy or deformed children to die was acceptable, even desirable, a notion that appears in Catherine Spence's *A Week in the Future*.[25] The idea of woman as "race-mother," although slightly transformed from the time of the Greek city-states, has appeared in utopias throughout history, in works such as Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (1602), Diderot's *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville* (1772, 1796) and William Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise*.[26] It was an important

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[22] A.D. Lindsay, Introduction to *The Republic* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1935), xxxvi.

[23] Plato, *The Republic* Ernest Rhys, trans. A.D. Lindsay, 1935, V, 145.

[24] For a more detailed discussion of Plato's attitudes towards women, see Daphne Patai, "Utopia for Whom?," *Aphra* 5, no. 3 (1974): 4-6.

[25] Krishan Kumar argues that utopia "was born with modernity," that is, it dates from the Renaissance and the Reformation. Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), 51. However, I am taking a broader view as noted in the introduction to this chapter.

Regarding the idea of eugenic breeding in the Greek city-states, see Neville-Sington and Sington, *Paradise Dreamed: How Utopian Thinkers Have Changed the Modern World*, 7-9.

[26] Tommaso Campanella, *The City of the Sun* (1602 [sighted 18 February 2002]); available from http://www.levity.com/alchemy/citysun.html.

References to Diderot's *Supplement* are from Neville-Sington and Sington, *Paradise Dreamed: How Utopian Thinkers Have Changed the Modern World*.

element in the discourses on nationalism and feminism in Australia in the late nineteenth century, receiving a boost with the popularity of the pseudo-sciences of social Darwinism and eugenics, discussed in chapter five.

These interpretations of women's role in utopia did not coincide with public campaigns for political and economic rights for women until the time of the French Revolution; as Barbara Caine observes, "in the early years of the French Revolution, women both in France and in England actively demanded citizenship and direct involvement in political life – but these rights were not granted."[27] The Revolution, which resulted in improved economic freedom for men and an extension of the suffrage to more men, had highlighted the fact that women did not receive the same benefits. Nevertheless, women's situation was arguably better during the Enlightenment period than it was in the nineteenth century – at least, Roy Porter is able to write that "in many respects Enlightenment culture was quite women-friendly … manifest [in] a general softening of patriarchy, in actuality though not in black-letter law," resulting in an improvement in their public position compared to previous periods.[28] Certainly, a number of women contributed to the public debate about the nature of women during the eighteenth century, so that Mary Wollstonecraft's response, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), to those "Writers Who Have Rendered Women Objects of Pity, Bordering on Contempt," a group which included Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was the culmination of decades of discussion on the issue.[29]

Wollstonecraft claimed that rational thought was not just the province of men. This could be proved, however, only through an improvement in women's education. Together with reform of the conditions under which women lived, it would make possible the improvement of society. Education would eliminate the ignorance that made women "foolish or vicious," with the consequence that "the most salutary effects tending to

[27] Caine, *English Feminism*, 11.

[28] Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2001), 324, 325.

[29] Title of chapter 5 in Wollstonecraft's book.

improve mankind might be expected from a REVOLUTION in female manners."[30] One of the reasons why Wollstonecraft is seen as the founder of modern feminism is the connection she made between women's education and progress; the enlightened woman would be capable of actually contributing to the progress of society, giving the notion of women's education "the twist of Enlightenment liberalism," as Miriam Brody puts it. Brody differentiates between Wollstonecraft's ideas and the earlier support for the reform of education for women by Mary Astell, whose work, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1694), implies "that the character of women is developed by their environment"; she sees Astell as unable to "envision a woman doing more than engaging in benevolent charity."[31]

Despite the arguments of Wollstonecraft and a few other writers throughout history, most male utopianists did not venture to propose such radical changes as female suffrage or improvements to women's education even after 1850 when activists for womens' rights were agitating publicly. Even one of the most famous utopian novels of the nineteenth century, *Looking Backward*, written at a time when the women's rights movement in America was in full swing, describes only a limited emancipation of women. While Bellamy supported female suffrage and the novel represented a society in which women had equality of income and could therefore marry for love and not for financial reasons, several critics have commented on the limited equality in his utopia.[32] He assumed, as did a number of socialists, that the elimination of social inequality would automatically lead to women's autonomy and sexual equality.[33]

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[30] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), ed. Miriam Brody (London: Penguin, 1992), 325.

[31] Miriam Brody, Introduction to *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. Miriam Brody, 28.

[32] See, for example, Elaine Hoffman Baruch, "Women in Men's Utopias", in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, 213-4; Lewes, *Dream Revisionaries: Gender and Genre in Women's Utopian Fiction*, 35-6; Jean Pfaelzer, "A State of One's Own: Feminism as Ideology in American Utopias 1880-1915," *Extrapolation* 24, no. 4 (1983): 315-17.

[33] Anne De Soyza, for example, writes that, according to Marx and Engels, "women … always appeared within the context of productive relations, not as actors, but as objects and symbolic victims of its excesses," rather than as victims of patriarchy. They argued that "since oppressive situations are all derived from economic relations, emancipation cannot be piecemeal."Anne De Soyza, "The Analysis of Prostitution: The Interpretative Framework of Marx and Engels", in *Sexuality and Gender in History: Selected Essays*, ed.

It took until 1897 and the publication of the sequel, *Equality*, for Bellamy to portray women as "the absolute equals of men" and to recognise the existence of the sexual double standard. Even from this novel, however, he apparently omitted a chapter about women, which Sylvia Bowman deduces contained radical ideas about sexual relationships and marriage, "because the world was not yet ready for its contents."[34] Perhaps he was being unnecessarily cautious, given that twenty years had passed since Catherine Spence's *Handfasted* had been rejected by the judge of the *Sydney Mail* novel competition in 1879. Certainly she was braver than Bellamy in depicting a form of trial marriage in this novel, but the fact that the judge regarded it as "calculated to loosen the marriage tie - it was too socialistic, and consequently dangerous," indicated that the world was not ready for such radical change to the institution of marriage.[35] It would seem more likely that Bellamy himself was not ready, for there were a few women such as Henrietta Dugdale who wrote utopian novels with radical feminist agendas and managed to have them published. Dugdale might have been mocked by reviewers, one of whom observes that "this commonplace, weary, work-a-day world, with its limited opportunities and repressive surroundings, is a sore trial to your high-toned, impulsive theorist [that is, Dugdale]," but her utopia has the strength of her convictions.[36]

While Dugdale's utopian novel was published in 1883 (probably paid for by Dugdale herself), Spence's *Handfasted* was not published until 1984, reflecting the larger problem of the invisibility of a significant amount of women's writing. The public dominance of male critics in the late nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century resulted in the marginalisation of works that questioned the *status quo* in relation to gender until the late twentieth century. The only text by a woman referred to in the Manuels' monumental study,

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Penelope Hetherington and Philippa Maddern (Perth: Hetherington and Maddern under the auspices of the Centre for Western Australian History at the University of Western Australia, 1993), 96-7.

[34] Sylvia E. Bowman, "Bellamy's Missing Chapter," *The New England Quarterly* 31, no. March (1958): 59-60, 47.

[35] Spence, *Autobiography*, 63.

[36] Henry Gyles Turner, "Review of 'A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age'," *Melbourne Review* 9 (1884): 96. See also Henrietta Dugdale, *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age* (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird and Co., 1883).

Utopian Thought in the Western World, for example, is Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666), which is mentioned in scornful terms as "schizophrenic" and as having "much in common with the delusions of Dr. Schreiber analyzed by Sigmund Freud in a famous paper."[37] Other examples of early utopian texts with a female subjectivity such as Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Mountgomeries Urania* (1709), Sarah Scott's *A Description of Millenium Hall* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* do not rate a mention in many histories of utopia until the late twentieth century.[38]

An explanation suggested by Elaine Hoffman Baruch for the invisibility of women's utopian writing is that male historians of utopia do not consider feminism to be a kind of utopian thought and action; she argues, however, that feminism is entitled to "a place among the grand visionary schemes" on the basis of its proposals for inverting existing societies, particularly the ideology and principle of patriarchy.[39] It would seem, then, that feminism and utopianism should be able to generate powerful and sometimes radically different fantasies of non-patriarchal worlds. Accordingly, the utopian genre has been used by a number of British and American writers to describe their visions of a better society in which the improvement of women's situation is a necessary component. The utopian texts written by women reveal a different facet of utopia, one that was apparently disregarded by male writers, resulting in utopian fiction that critically observes relations between the sexes. Spence takes up this connection between feminism and utopianism in both of her utopian novels: in *Handfasted*'s utopian country of Columba, the sexual double standard that made outcasts of women who were not sexually innocent at marriage is removed, while *A Week in the Future* depicts easily accessible contraception and divorce.

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[37] Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, 2.

[38] Such early histories of utopia that exclude women's utopias include Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Joyce Hertzler, *The History of Utopian Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*.

[39] Elaine Hoffman Baruch, "Introduction: The Quest and the Questions", in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, xii.

Catherine Spence's utopias reflect the progress that a society might make if sexual and economic equality for women were implemented. *A Week in the Future* indicates that Spence had some familiarity with the ideas of Charles Fourier, one of the utopian socialists of the early nineteenth century. Fourier clearly articulated the connection between women and progress, claiming that "social progress and changes of historical period are brought about as a result of the progress of women towards liberty…."[40] In the opening chapter of this novella, Spence describes the "associated homes" that will be the basis of the British life-style a hundred years hence. A resident of one of these homes explains their operation to the visitor from 1888, acknowledging their indebtedness to "these devoted men," Robert Owen, another of the utopian socialists, and Fourier, whose experiments may have failed but who paved the way for the new co-operative living arrangements of the future.[41] Although Spence never theorised in the style of Mary Wollstonecraft or Fourier about women's oppression, or directly attacked in general terms the position of women in nineteenth-century Australian society, there is sufficient evidence in her writing that she supported the connection between the advancement of women and society's progress. In the civics textbook she wrote for South Australian school-children, *The Laws We Live Under* (1880), she connects the progress of a society, indeed, the world, with the "character and conduct" of women as well as men in government, and argues that "there can be no greater mistake for girls to make than to suppose they have nothing to do with good citizenship and good government."[42] Women's moral superiority may have been the basis for her argument, for she later claimed that "there is no doubt that the admission of women to full political rights would aid the progress of society" in relation to the elimination of gambling, prostitution and drunkenness. [43]

Spence's views were never as radical as Fourier's, but it is possible to see elements of his philosophy in the relative sexual freedom she allows women in *Handfasted's* utopia of

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[40] Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements*, 132.

[41] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 32.

[42] Spence, *Laws*, 8.

[43] C.H. Spence, "Woman's Suffrage and Effective Voting," A paper read at a drawing-room meeting at Glenelg, *The Voice*, 9 December 1892.

Columba, which will be explored in more detail later in this chapter. Fourier's statement that "the extension of the privileges of women [is] the basic principle of all social progress"[44] was to some extent carried out in his formulation of a utopian commune in which the patriarchal, monogamous family would disappear, along with the religious and legal structures that gave it authority. Sexual pleasure was central, with women being free to form "simultaneous erotic or companionate relationships with several men" from the age of eighteen. In his phalansteries (or communes), women would control reproduction, with children free to choose between real and adoptive fathers.[45] Although his plans disintegrated in the face of reality, his articulation of radical extensions to women's rights gave both theoretical and practical bases for women's economic and sexual freedom. As Gareth Stedman-Jones argues, "no theorist before him had conceived a more resolutely anti-patriarchal vision of social and sexual order."[46]

Spence's sympathy with Robert Owen, an English manufacturer whose chief concern was to address the problems associated with poverty, was based on a shared belief in the importance of the social environment rather than heredity in forming character.[47] Owen's desire to remake society through the elimination of competition and the promotion of cooperation was grounded in this notion of human malleability. By changing the basis of modern industrial society and thereby eliminating the alienation and fragmentation that had affected all within that society, he and his followers believed that human character could be transformed, and injustice and inequality would disappear. Owen set out to test his belief in the power of the environment to affect the characters of human beings by operating his mills at New Lanark, near Glasgow, according to his principles. His success at New Lanark, as V.A.C. Gatrell observes, "widened his horizons" and encouraged him to apply similar principles "for the complete regeneration of society."[48]

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[44] Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements*, 132.

[45] Gareth Stedman-Jones, Introduction to *The Theory of the Four Movements*, xiii-xiv.

[46] Ibid., xiii.

[47] This is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

[48] V.A.C. Gatrell, Introduction to *A New View of Society and Report to the County of Lanark*, ed. V.A.C. Gatrell, 9.

The arguments offered by eighteenth-century thinkers such as Wollstonecraft and Alexander, and later articulated by Fourier, that an improvement in women's situation was linked with the progress of society, were enthusiastically taken up by the Owenites, as Owen's followers became known. William Thompson and Anna Wheeler, Owenite intellectuals and feminists, for example, in their *Appeal of One-Half the Human Race* argued against James Mill's claim that "the interest of almost all …[women] is involved either in that of their father or in that of their husbands …" by outlining the patriarchal power structure that led to women's interests being completely disregarded.[49] Extolling the virtues of Owen's "system of Mutual Association," Thompson sees "the equalization of knowledge, rights and wealth between the sexes," as the precursor to the liberation of men as well as women: "O woman … as your bondage has chained down man to the ignorance and vices of despotism, so will your liberation reward him with knowledge, with freedom, and with happiness …."[50] Transformation would be especially important for women, whose characters had been artificially blighted by a lack of education, as Wollstonecraft had argued earlier. Besides offering women increased educational opportunities, a communal structure would replace the divisive and isolating structure of the family. The tyranny exerted within marriage by men over women would vanish in this new community, divorce and contraception would be more accessible and women would generally be treated as the equals of men.[51]

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[49] Barbara Taylor notes the difficulties associated with ascribing authorship of the *Appeal*, which was "conceived and developed" by both Wheeler and Thompson, but published under Thompson's name only. This was apparently due to her lack of "leisure and resolution." See footnote in Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago, 1983), 22-3.

James Mill, *Essay on Government* (1821), quoted in Caine, *English Feminism*, 58.

[50] William Thompson, *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most conducive to Human Happiness* (1824), quoted in Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 24.

[51] See Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Quest for the New Moral World*, 60-2; Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, ch.2.

For an analysis of the implementation in Owenite communities of these ideas about women's role, see Jill Harsin, "Housework and Utopia: Women and the Owenite Socialist Communities", in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch.

As the women's movement in Britain became involved in an increasing number of issues relating to women's rights, some of these utopian/feminist ideas were absorbed and transformed into concrete aspects of feminist activism. The issue of women's suffrage, for example, began to be debated after the Reform Act of 1832 in England, but it was also significant in France for followers of another of the utopian-socialists, Henri Saint-Simon, who "demanded the extension of the franchise to women at the time of the revolution of 1830."[52] Evolving into an organised campaign in the late 1860s in England, the issue was eventually seen as only a part of the solution to a much bigger problem: the lack of autonomy of women. Legal reform in relation to married women's rights, the elimination of the sexual double standard, and improved access to employment opportunities could all be seen as utopian goals in that they constituted a challenge to the *status quo*. They were also seen by many women and some men as essential if society was to progress, with John Stuart Mill suggesting "that the loss to the world, by refusing to make use of one-half of the whole quantity of talent it possesses, is extremely serious."[53] The level of support for change varied but women's desire for sexual, social, economic and political autonomy was becoming a significant component of the transformation taking place in Victorian England. It also affected the constituency of the intellectual class who commented on this "age of improvement." Thus an intellectual woman such as Harriet Martineau was able, while following the patriarchal line in many respects, to introduce the subject of sexual politics in powerful prose that condemns women's current status:

> [Women are] less than half-educated, precluded from earning a subsistence, except in a very few ill-paid employments, and prohibited from giving or withholding their assent to laws which they are yet bound by penalties to obey…the degree of degradation of women is as good a test as the moralist can adapt for ascertaining the state of domestic morals in any country.[54]

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[52] Gregory Claeys, "Socialism and Utopia", in *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*, ed. Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys, and Lyman Tower Sargent, 219. This was also known as the July Revolution and was an attempt by the middle classes to gain a bigger voice in the government of Charles X. See William Bridgwater and Seymour Kurtz, eds., *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963; reprint, 1968).

[53] John Stuart Mill, "The Subjection of Women" (1869), in *Essays on Sex Equality*, ed. Alice S. Rossi (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 221.

[54] Harriet Martineau, *How to Observe Manners and Morals* (1838), quoted in David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, 46.

What may have once seemed a utopian prospect – the acceptance by mainstream British intellectual circles and by the British public of a woman who openly criticised the status of women - was becoming a reality in Britain. It was a reality that was to make its way to colonial Australia: as Spence observed in 1893: "The Utopia of yesterday is the possession of today and opens the way to the Utopia of tomorrow."[55]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, women writers in Australia were able to critique society's shortcomings in relation to women, work and marriage through their novels. Writers such as Spence in *Clara Morison* (1854) and Elizabeth Murray in *Ella Norman* (1864) represented women's reality in colonial society, highlighting its "shortage of compatible males, the desperate search for appropriate work, and the sweated labour and ignominy which the position of governess often entailed."[56] Some of the later writers created domestic romances that, as Susan Sheridan argues, gave them the opportunity to make critical comments on the relations between the sexes.[57] There were few utopian novels written by women, but those by Spence and Henrietta Dugdale imagined relations between the sexes and the status of women as an integral element of their imaginary societies.

Nineteenth-century Australian visions of a better society in the form of fictional utopias were dominated by male writers, who generally followed the conventions of the period's boys'-own adventure narrative inherited from Britain.[58] Examples of the genre include Robert Ellis Dudgeon's *Colymbia* (1873) and G. Read Murphy's *Beyond the Ice* (1894) in which male heroes stumble across secret worlds that take advantage of amazingly advanced

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[55] Spence, *Autobiography*, 101. The latter portion of Spence's *Autobiography* was written by Jeanne Young after Spence's death, but this quotation also appears in Catherine Helen Spence, "Australian Answers to Some American Problems," in *South Australian Archives (microfilm)*, ed. (Adelaide: 1893).

[56] Walker, "Perceptions of Australia, 1855-1915", 169.

[57] Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, xii.

[58] For an analysis of nineteenth-century Anglo-Australian adventure-romance novels, see Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See also John Docker, *The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), ch.13&14 for an examination of William Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise*, an Australian utopian novel published in 1892.

scientific inventions.[59] Others involve cautionary tales about Australia's invasion by non-Anglo-Saxon enemies such as Kenneth Mackay's *The Yellow Wave* (1895) or William Lane's serialised novel in the *Boomerang*, "White or Yellow" (1888).[60] Some writers took their work very seriously, constructing socialist or anarchist societies aimed at equity and justice for the working class or arcadian communities that retained the individualism of capitalism while enjoying the benefits of co-operation.[61] Most ignored women, except as love-interest or help-meet, in line with the powerful Victorian ideology of separate spheres for men and women, women being best-suited, supposedly, to the domestic sphere while men were able to participate fully in the public arena, with little involvement in domestic life.[62] The male writers of fictional utopias perhaps followed this particular convention in an attempt to imitate the "ripping yarn," whose popularity Robert Dixon attributes to "their perceived role as an antidote to the degeneration and feminising of the race, and to their accessible fantasy of masculine and Anglo-Saxon supremacy in a world turned upside down."[63] Exceptions to this theme of masculine dominance were provided by such novels as William Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise* (1892) and Julius Vogel's *Anno Domini 2000* (1890), which depicted women as key protagonists in the transition to utopia and in the achieved utopia.

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[59] Robert Ellis Dudgeon, *Colymbia* (London: Trubner, 1873); G. Read Murphy, *Beyond the Ice: Being a Story of the Newly Discovered Region around the North Pole* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co, [1894]).

[60] William Lane, "White or Yellow, a Story of the Race War of Ad1908," *Boomerang*, 18 February-5 May 1888; Kenneth Mackay, *The Yellow Wave: A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia* (London: R. Bentley, 1895). For more on Australian "invasion scare" writing, see Neville Meaney, "'The Yellow Peril': Invasion Scare Novels and Australian Political Culture", in *The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture*, ed. Ken Stewart (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996).

[61] See, for example, David Andrade, *The Melbourne Riots and How Harry Holdfast and His Friends Emancipated the Workers; a Realistic Novel* (Melbourne: The Author, 1892); Samuel Albert Rosa, *The Coming Terror: A Romance of the Twentieth Century* (Sydney: The Author, 1894); Horace Tucker, *The New Arcadia* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1894). For a detailed survey of nineteenth-century Australian utopian and dystopian fiction, see Robyn Walton, "Heaven and Hell: A Survey of Utopian and Anti-Utopian Prose Fiction Published by Australians since 1870" (MA, University of Melbourne, 1978). An extensive bibliography is contained in Lyman Tower Sargent, "Australian Utopian Literature: An Annotated Chronological Bibliography, 1667-1999," *Utopian Studies* 10, no. 2 (1999).

[62] This ideology is discussed in more detail in ch. 1.

[63] Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, 5.

Women in Australia appeared to disregard the utopian genre as a means of protesting about the rights of women, but also as a means of imagining the future at all. Compared to the number of utopias written by men in Australia and by British and American women, the utopian imaginings of Australian women writers in the nineteenth century are negligible. Nan Bowman Albinski lists 23 utopian works by British women and 60 by American women in the nineteenth century and up to 1915, while my research reveals five Australian texts by women that can be regarded as utopian: Spence's *Handfasted* (1879, 1984) and *A Week in the Future* (1888-9), Dugdale's *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age* (1883), Mary Ann Moore-Bentley's *A Woman of Mars: Or, Australia's Unenfranchised Woman* (1901), Ethel Turner's satirical short story, "A Story of Strange Sights" (1895), and Millie Finklestein's *The Newest Woman: The Destined Monarch of the New World* (1895), although the latter is more accurately characterised as dystopian.[64]

Albinski perhaps provides a clue as to why fictional utopias were not a more popular method of disseminating feminist messages in Australia when she observes that British utopias were not all that radical in their approach to sexual equality. As models for feminist activism, even in late nineteenth-century terms, they were probably not very inspiring to Australian feminists. The British utopian writers were not prominent among British feminists, although there were feminists like Olive Schreiner and Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy who presented some of their arguments in utopian allegory and poetry.[65] Many Australian feminists of the 1880s and 1890s seem to have found other means of making their views known, feminist journals being the medium of choice for Louisa Lawson (the *Dawn*), Vida Goldstein (*Australian Woman's Sphere*) and Maybanke Wolstenholme

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[64] Nan Bowman Albinski, *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 42-3,72-4.

For bibliographies of Australian utopias by men and women, see Nan Bowman Albinski, "A Survey of Australian Utopian and Dystopian Fiction," *Australian Literary Studies* 13, no. 1 (1987); Sargent, "Australian Utopian Literature: An Annotated Chronological Bibliography, 1667-1999"; Walton, "Heaven and Hell".

[65] See Olive Schreiner, "Three Dreams in the Desert", in *Dreams* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1890); Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy, *Woman Free* (Congleton: Women's Emancipation Union, 1893). N.B. I was unable to locate the latter work; the reference is from Albinski, *Women's Utopias*.

(*Woman's Voice*).[66] A number of feminist socialists used the pages of the socialist newspapers, the *Tocsin* and the *Worker*, along with its predecessor, the *Hummer* to debate feminist issues, with William Lane writing under the female pseudonym Lucinda Sharpe.[67] Subversion of those patriarchal ideologies which served to restrict women's activities and choices was more often contained within the domestic realism and romances of novelists such as Ada Cambridge, Tasma (Jessie Couvreur) and Rosa Praed through their strong female characters who ask questions about love, marriage and sex,[68] much as Spence had done a few years earlier.

The interest among many writers and readers in fictional utopias in the latter part of the nineteenth century, including Spence's own, built to some extent on the social experiments of the utopian socialists earlier in the century. While Spence never expressed a desire to experiment with communal living, she showed great interest in the village settlements along the Murray River, and supported co-operation over competition in both economics and politics.[69] *A Week in the Future* reflects her (and Jane Clapperton's) vision of a communal society based on the experiments of Owen and Fourier, who had been influenced by radical Enlightenment thinkers such as William Godwin, the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft, and Thomas Spence[70] in the late eighteenth century. Both Thomas Spence and Godwin had addressed the status of women in their utopian proposals, with Spence proposing equal participation by women in land rights and equal political rights, ideas taken up by Catherine Spence in *Handfasted*, and Godwin arguing for the end of formal marriage and the co-

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[66] For analysis of these journals, see Docker, *The Nervous Nineties*, ch.1&2; Brian Matthews, "Dawn Crusade", in *Rebels and Radicals*, ed. Eric Fry; Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, ch. 6; Susan Sheridan, "The *Woman's Voice* on Sexuality", in *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, ed. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, and Susan Sheridan (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993).

[67] See Patricia Grimshaw, "The 'Equals and Comrades of Men?': *Tocsin* and 'the Woman Question'", in *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, ed. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, and Susan Sheridan (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993); Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, ch. 7.

[68] See Adelaide, ed., *A Bright and Fiery Troop;* Giles, "Romance: An Embarrassing Subject"; Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, part 1.

[69] See chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of Spence's views on cooperation.

[70] No relation to Catherine Spence.

residential family unit with communal domestic arrangements replacing them, elements of which appear in both *Handfasted* and *A Week in the Future*.[71]

Owen's ideas about a "New Moral World" were put into practice in a number of communities in Britain between 1821 and 1845, but, according to Barbara Taylor, they "nearly all had short, crisis-ridden lives."[72] There were a number of reasons for their collapse, with the failure of the feminist aspects of Owenism being attributed by Taylor mainly to the daily struggle for survival which took precedence over social experimentation. Changes to women's lives, such as communal house-keeping and cooking and widely accessible childcare, that would lead to their emancipation had seemed promising in the outside world, but they did not address the basic problem of the inequitable sharing of labour when domestic work was taken into account. A poem written by Mary Gilmore soon after her marriage to William Gilmore in New Australia, the utopian settlement in Paraguay established by William Lane, suggests that a housewife's life in utopia was not so different from life at home (apart from the singing perhaps), despite William Lane's grand feminist claims in *The Workingman's Paradise*. Gilmore wrote

> It's singin' in an' out,
> An' round about the place
> Here an' there, an' up an' down
> An' feeling full of grace.
> It's rollin' up your sleeves,
> An' whitenin' up the hearth,
> An' scrubbin' out the floors,
> An' sweepin' down the path … [73]

In contrast, Catherine Spence's communal homes in *A Week in the Future* do away with women's responsibility for domestic chores by having them performed by paid employees, while childcare is undertaken by nurseries within the homes, practical solutions that indicate some awareness of the problems of putting theory into practice. While women were theoretically granted an equal say in government in the Owenite communities, internal

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[71] Regarding Godwin and Thomas Spence's ideas, see Porter, *Enlightenment*, 455-60.

[72] Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 238. This account is drawn from chapter 8 of Taylor's work.

[73] *Cosme Monthly Notes*, December 1897, quoted in Anne Whitehead, *Paradise Mislaid: In Search of the Australian Tribe of Paraguay* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1997), 308-9.

power still ended up being male-dominated. Marriage reform remained theoretically important too, but in practice it was mostly irrelevant, given that most couples were married before they arrived and few requested divorces.[74] One exception was the community at Manea Fen in England whose founder, William Hodson, was in favour of the abolition of marriage altogether, with "free love" as the preferred basis of relationships between men and women, but this survived only from 1838 to 1840 after a series of crises.

Also informing Spence's and other feminist utopias were the experiments that took place in America, a country which had its own utopian tradition – that of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."[75] One of the communities established there in the late eighteenth century appears to have been more successful than any of the Owen experiments. The American Shakers were founded in 1780 by Ann Lee who fled persecution in England in 1774. Its principles have been embraced by about 17,000 people since then, with some small groups still existing in New Hampshire and Maine, according to Ruby Rohrlich.[76] Shaker principles included sexual and racial equality, although the communities were hierarchically structured – this time with female leadership. Celibacy was central to women attaining their pre-lapsarian state, with men and women leading lives that were "interdependent but separate, parallel but symbiotic," with Shaker communes providing "havens for women with marital and economic problems."[77] Agriculturally-based like many other nineteenth-century experimental communities, they managed to establish an efficient system of farming and distribution, so that the economic problems that plagued Owenite communities or Lane's Paraguayan settlements did not occur.

Another utopian feminist, Frances Wright, was influenced enough by Owen's American community at New Harmony in Indiana to establish her own cooperative community in

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[74] Marriage and politics in Spence's utopias are discussed in some detail later in this chapter.

[75] The American Declaration of Independence in Edward Conrad Smith, ed., *The Constitution of the United States* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 27.

[76] Ruby Rohrlich, "The Shakers: Gender Equality in Hierarchy", in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, 54.

[77] Ibid., 57.

Tennessee. Initially fired by a belief in a slaveless society, her vision extended to include, at various times, co-operation, communism, democracy and "strong leadership, as well as free sexuality and racial amalgamation."[78] The libertarian sexual code that Wright laid down for the commune she founded at Nashoba became notorious in the surrounding Tennessee community, while internally there seem to have been problems of women being "coerced and intimidated" into sexual liaisons by Nashoba men, as Barbara Taylor suggests.[79] Rohrlich does not offer any specific reasons for the end of Nashoba, but Taylor argues that it was caused by the collapse of morale related to the sexual behaviour of the inhabitants.[80] Catherine Spence does not repeat Wright's sexual libertarianism, probably because she was much more conservative in her views about sex, but she does recognise in her utopias that sexual equality is a significant component of any attempt at egalitarianism.

Many of the problems that Taylor describes in relation to the demise of the Owenite communities sound similar to those which occurred in William Lane's utopian communities in Paraguay in the 1890s.[81] What began with revolutionary fervour and a desire to establish a "vanguard" of socialism ended up with socialist and feminist ideals being compromised by personality conflicts, Lane's dictatorial attitudes and the struggle to survive. The reason for the failure of what appeared to be feminist theoretical concepts in Owenite communities is attributed by Harsin to Owen's desire to "transplant an essentially middle-class family structure with all its traditional obligations and responsibilities ... to the New Moral World."[82] William Lane seems to have repeated this mistake of transferring old inequalities and structures to the new environment. Traditional concepts about marriage and gender relations are evident in Mary Gilmore's article "Women in New Australia" in the *New Australia* journal, in which she tried to encourage single women in Australia to join up and

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[78] Marilyn Bensman, "Frances Wright: Utopian Feminist", in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, 63.

[79] Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 67-8.

[80] Ibid., 68.

[81] See Gavin Souter, *A Peculiar People: The Australians in Paraguay* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968); Whitehead, *Paradise Mislaid*.

[82] Harsin, "Housework and Utopia: Women and the Owenite Socialist Communities", 81-2.

marry the bachelors already in Paraguay on the basis of the desirability and naturalness of marriage:

> It is absurd that we should have any false modesty in speaking of the sexual relations in which are bound up all the strength, the happiness, and the purity of our race …. We hold a man's life as incomplete unless he has taken a woman to his heart and enthroned her in a home round which is built the impregnable wall of marriage. We hold that a woman has lived vainly, and without the crowning joy of living, unless from among manly men she has chosen in free will a husband upon whom, in all purity and virtue, she can pour out the passionate affection that is in all true women's hearts … We hold that the Mother-woman is the highest and best of all.[83]

Lane probably intensified the problem by moving his band of pioneers to another country, one which was culturally alien and in which they were quite isolated.

While there appears to have been no analysis as yet of the gender issues that arose in New Australia and Cosme, Michael Wilding's "documentary novel," *The Paraguayan Experiment*, suggests that one particular value that was transplanted from Australia was that of sexual conservatism. One of the characters observes that Lane "feels the need for change and development, but he won't allow sexual change."[84] Lane's values were imposed on the whole community, so that the transgression of Lane's "Colour Line" by the single white men in their desire for the Guarani women led to increasingly dictatorial behaviour by Lane, as well as considerable frustration on the part of the men. Wanting to preserve the Anglo-Saxon purity of the group of colonists, Lane had them pledge before leaving Australia that there would be no racial fraternising.[85] The problem was only exacerbated when the grumbling of the women colonists about life in New Australia led to Lane sending a cable to the Association in Australia that read "[d]elay all women for six months. Send bushmen with all possible despatch."[86] Spence's position on sexual relationships, and miscegenation in particular, in her utopia of Columba was markedly different. The shortage of Scottish

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[83] *New Australia*, 27 January 1894, quoted in W.H. Wilde, *Courage a Grace: A Biography of Dame Mary Gilmore* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 94.

[84] Michael Wilding, *The Paraguayan Experiment* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1984), 35.

[85] Whitehead, *Paradise Mislaid*, 177.

[86] Quoted in Wilding, *The Paraguayan Experiment*, 109.

women in the new colony of Columba leads to a pragmatic recognition of the likelihood of sexual fraternisation between the native Indian women and the white men. Hence the introduction of the practice of handfasting, the attempts at assimilation of the Indian women or, if that was not possible, an honourable separation, were at least somewhat enlightened for the time, if patronising and imperialistic.

Like Lane's Paraguayan settlements, most utopian communities established in Australia in the nineteenth century did not last very long, although Herrnhut in western Victoria, founded by a Prussian evangelical dissenter, Johann Krumnow, managed to survive for 37 years.[87] The reasons for their demise are generally similar, according to William Metcalf – problems of leadership, recruitment and governance and establishing a sustainable economy – and still apply to modern communities.[88] Whether their theoretical foundations lay in socialism, feminism or religion, these nineteenth-century utopias all carried with them aspects of the society that they wanted to leave behind. It is difficult to know if this is the result of the "imperfection of human nature," as John Humphrey Noyes, the founder of the Oneida settlement in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, suggested, or to do with the nature of utopian visions and their tendency to fall short in the area of practical considerations. Whatever the causes of any particular utopia's downfall, it seems that success is elusive, a point Spence notes in *Handfasted* when Hugh Keith summarises the impossibility of recreating Columba in the wider world:

> No such continuous equality of conditions could be possible in a wider field open to all the disturbing elements of different degrees of talent, industry, thrift and opportunity, not to speak of monopoly. Here the social organism is not compact and proportioned, but with great excrescences and devouring hollows, and when you would smooth down here and fill up there, it is as if you tried to stem the ocean with a mop.[89]

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[87] For the history of Herrnhut, see William J. Metcalf and Elizabeth Huf, *Herrnhut: Australia's First Utopian Commune* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

[88] Bill Metcalf, *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality: Co-Operative Lifestyles in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995), 137.

[89] Spence, *Handfasted*, 334-5.

Despite, or perhaps because of, their failures, experiments in utopian living can be useful to those who want to refashion the world. They highlight the potential problems associated with the practical implementation of ideas that sound fine in theory but for various reasons do not translate into reality. The egalitarian ideal often collapses, with one individual becoming dominant; as Elaine Baruch observes, "this is potentially dangerous, particularly when the leader is a male, as has been overwhelmingly the case, for his leadership symbolizes a return to the patriarchal father."[90] William Lane, for example, was described by an observer from the British Legation in Buenos Aires, Mr M. De C. Findlay, during the period of expulsions from New Australia, as

> being possessed of an iron will; but also as being remarkably deficient in the tact and human sympathy so necessary in a leader of men. His views are very strong and would appear narrow to most men … To him the articles of association and agreements signed are as the Code of the Medes and Persians, and any infringement thereof must be summarily dealt with.[91]

Spence avoids such a possibility in her utopias. In Columba, there is no single male leader but, rather, a democratically-elected council composed of citizens who are not necessarily the wisest or best. In her later utopia, 1988 England is ruled by an indirectly elected President, with a Lower House and Senate. The Associated Home is the foundation for the structure of society, "the unit … from which commercial associations proceeded, rising to national association up to the confederation of the world for peaceful industry and interchange of commodities and ideas."[92] Economic problems are non-existent in these fictional utopias, but Spence had the luxury of creating fictional worlds whose inhabitants are generally highly motivated and willing to sacrifice their interests to the greater good, rather than real people who could be lazy or greedy, petty or rebellious.

Communal experiments do have value, as Aldous Huxley suggests, not only to demonstrate "what ought not to be done," but to contribute, when they are done well, "to our knowledge

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[90] Elaine Hoffman Baruch, "Introduction: The Recent Past", in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, 52.

[91] Quoted in Souter, *A Peculiar People*. For details of the antagonisms and the split within the New Australia settlement, see Souter, *A Peculiar People*, ch.6.

[92] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 46.

of that most difficult and most important of all the arts – the art of living together in harmony and with benefit for all concerned."[93] Very few succeed, but their failure demonstrates what the limits are when imagining human and social perfectibility, perhaps modifying the more fantastic dreams of some utopian thinkers. Certainly Spence's utopias, while containing a disproportionate number of model citizens, also contain elements of realism that acknowledge human fallibility. Such pragmatism perhaps reflects her appreciation of the difficulties of creating a workable utopia, based on such real-life experiments described above.

Do the failures of mostly male-dominated experiments mean that feminist utopias governed by women, such as the Shakers and Nashoba, are doomed as well? It might be worth citing, as a partial response, the experience of the Woman's Commonwealth in Belton, Texas, in the nineteenth century. It consisted of a group of women who formed a separatist commune to further their religious beliefs, and who were willing to undertake menial tasks in order to obtain economic independence. Beginning as a network of women united by a "brand of non-sectarian Pentecostal Wesleyanism," they purchased a farm in the 1870s, built a flourishing hotel, traveled, educated themselves in the skills necessary to support themselves, bought another farm and hotel in Waco, and stayed together until at least 1918.[94] It is not clear what happened after that, but it seems the Woman's Commonwealth worked well for at least thirty years. One possible reason for its success, proposed by Harriette Andreadis, is the absence of men: "… if men were absent, an intentional community might offer to women … a model for successful religious, economic, sexual, and emotional self-determination."[95] Elaine Baruch suggests that it was not only the fact that these women were willing to do any kind of manual work to support themselves, but it

[93] Aldous Huxley, "Ozymandias", in *Adonis and the Alphabet* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), 4.

[94] A. Harriette Andreadis, "The Woman's Commonwealth: Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Texas", in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, 87-8.

[95] Ibid., 91. Andreadis cites in a footnote the following from a 1902 article about the Commonwealth (which I am unable to resist repeating): "'Oh, yes, we have had men among us,' they say; 'they are welcome if they are willing to live the life we do. But they never stay very long. You see it is in the nature of men to want to boss – and – Well, they find they can't'" (96).

was “also the matter of who makes the rules, and assigns the values and the wages.”[96] Perhaps feminist utopias are not doomed after all, but need to be based on theories that do not merely support or transplant patriarchal ideologies. One of the ways in which such radical changes might be effected is described by Catherine Spence in *Handfasted* through the implementation of sexual equality.

Twentieth-century critics can detect conservative aspects within *Handfasted* in the “restrictions that go with the custom [of handfasting] … [making] the book … a strong attack on promiscuity.”[97] However, I would suggest that Helen Thomson’s comment that Spence realised “that the mores governing sexual behaviour were the basis of female inequality and all other feminist aims … were really only peripheral” is a more accurate assessment of the book, and going to the heart of its radicalism.[98] Perhaps utopian fiction was the only genre through which Spence felt the subject of sexual equality could be broached. The radical nature of the society that she constructs in *Handfasted* might have been imagined by others in the nineteenth century such as Fourier and Owen, and indeed put into practice in some utopian communities in America such as Frances Wright’s Nashoba community in Texas, but nineteenth-century Australia was not ready for such fundamental changes. The close historical, cultural, social and economic ties between Britain and Australia had been loosened somewhat over the one hundred years since British colonisation, but the patriarchal ideology imported with the first arrivals remained powerful. In particular, “heavy ideological stress was placed on the family,” a concept which remained central to notions of bourgeois respectability and, increasingly, to the aspirations of the white working class.[99] The tendency to marry late, however, as well as the gender imbalance in the population, meant that, as Connell and Irving note, it “was not yet a spectacular success as an agency of cultural control.”[100] Nevertheless, what was acceptable

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[96] Baruch, "Introduction: The Recent Past", 50.

[97] Myfanwy Gollan, "Loosen Your Marriage Tie," *Sydney Morning Herald* (1984): 73.

[98] Helen Thomson, Afterword to *Handfasted*, 378.

[99] R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History* (1980), ed., 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992), 104.

[100] Ibid.

or not acceptable in terms of sexual behaviour within the middle class was largely defined by how it conformed to this ideology. As Jeffrey Weeks observes in *Sex, Politics and Society*, there were a range of forces that operated to define acceptability – "from ideological articulation to medical and legal practices and moral endeavour" – which intersected "at that crucial site for modern ideology, the family."[101] The expectation by most men (and women) that women were primarily responsible for the creation and maintenance of the family meant that sexual behaviour by women that challenged this "norm" was seen as considerably more threatening than similar behaviour by men, producing a sexual double standard.

The "Great Social Evil" of prostitution is a good example of how the double standard operated and is one of the social problems that Spence attacks in *Handfasted*. Male sexuality was accepted in nineteenth century Australia as being "hydraulic … and insatiable," in Susan Magarey's words.[102] Combined with the belief that woman possessed less interest in sex because of "a natural safeguard against persistent passion," which protected her from "the baser and more animal part of her nature," such a view made prostitution a necessary evil in the eyes of many.[103] On the other hand, prostitutes were also seen as undermining respectable society, luring young men to their ruin and spreading venereal disease.[104] As the nineteenth century progressed, more radical political views were aired, with many social reformers perceiving prostitutes as victims of the "white slave traffic" or the capitalist system who were therefore to be pitied and rescued.[105] Feminism

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[101] Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1989), 24.

[102] Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, 3.

[103] Clement Scott, "An Equal Standard of Morality" (1894), quoted in Peter T. Cominos, "Innocent Femina Sensualis in Unconscious Conflict" (1973), in *Suffer and Be Still*, ed. Martha Vicinus, 160.

For discussions of sexuality in the nineteenth century, see Bland, *Banishing the Beast;* Jackson, *The Real Facts of Life: Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality C. 1850-1940;* Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*.

[104] Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, eds., *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 167.

[105] See, for example, W.T. Stead, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 July 1885. The scandalous episode that Stead used as the basis of this article was, however, a classic example of a tabloid "beat-up." As A.N. Wilson observes, the sale of a girl into prostitution that Stead claims he witnessed was a

and socialism helped to provide alternative perceptions of prostitutes in Australia. The feminist, Rose Scott, for example, saw prostitution as a "graphic exemplar … of the degraded position of all women," while in William Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise*, prostitution is a symbol of what is wrong with capitalism and what is right about socialism; when Nellie Lawton, the heroine, stoops to kiss a sleeping prostitute in a Sydney park, she is declaring that socialism equals "fellowship with all who are wronged and oppressed."[106]

Spence, too, rejects the idea of prostitutes as evil and offers an alternative to those views of male sexuality as hydraulic and middle-class female sexuality as non-existent in *Handfasted*. Trial marriages that allow men and women to change their sexual partners merely by ending their handfasting are assumed to be sufficient to eliminate the need for prostitution. She highlights the absurdity of the sexual double standard using a technique common in utopian fiction of defamiliarisation, in which existing perceptions are questioned, making "what is accepted as sacred appear strange and monstrous."[107] Her critique of the world outside the utopia of Columba is offered to us through the eyes of Liliard, who has only experienced the sexual equality of Columba. As the reader travels with Liliard and Hugh through America and England, it is through Liliard's eyes that we see; her shock breaks "through the crust of what is considered obvious and natural"[108] so that the reader discovers with her the ways in which the double standard has become unquestioningly accepted. Hugh has to explain to Liliard when they reach New York about these "bold, faced-painted [sic], showily dressed women … using freely slang and profane and indecent language" (303). She is made aware of prostitution for the first time and becomes agitated as she begins to understand the consequences of a lack of financial

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masquerade and Stead went to jail for three months for his part in the fraud. A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003), 475-6.

[106] Judith Allen, "'Our Deeply Degraded Sex' and 'The Animal in Man': Rose Scott, Feminism and Sexuality 1890-1925," *Australian Feminist Studies* 7 and 8 (1988): 74.; Lane, *Workingman's Paradise*, 105.

[107] Daphne Patai, "When Women Rule: Defamiliarization in the Sex-Role Reversal Utopia," *Extrapolation* 23, no. 1 (1982): 57. Patai discusses the origin of the term in the work of Victor Shklovsky, one of the Russian formalists, and of Bertolt Brecht and his theory of drama.

[108] Ibid.: 67.

independence for women. The fact that it is only the women who become social outcasts because of the transaction puzzles her, “for surely the buyer is as bad as the seller” (304).

The double standard in relation to illegitimate children was also a matter of great concern to Spence. With limited and not always effective access to birth control, and under increasing moral pressure to remain respectable, women had few options for dealing with illegitimate children. If infanticide or “baby farming” were rejected, the children, tainted by the concept of original sin as well as being victimised because of the sins of their mothers against respectability, were very poorly treated by orphanages and other institutions.[109] In the case of single mothers, most fathers generally managed to avoid even the limited legislative requirements to support the children, so the burden of raising them was solely the mother’s.[110] Spence eliminates the notion of illegitimacy altogether in Columba, for the children of handfasting are equal in status to those born within marriage. In the event of the end of a handfasting, the partner who does not request the termination of the relationship claims the right to any children. The children do not increase the likelihood of poverty and ostracism for the parent who rears them because there is no poverty in Columba and no social stigma associated with illegitimacy. If neither partner wants to rear the offspring, the children are designated as “God’s bairns” and brought up by the state. They are highly educated – in fact, they are the only citizens of Columba taught to read and write – and enter the élite professions of teaching, medicine, public service, religion and justice. Contrary to being treated as society’s outcasts, they are placed in positions of authority over other citizens. With parents knowing this, infanticide, baby-farming and abortion do not exist.

Spence’s rejection of the doctrine of original sin meant that condemning the child for the behaviour of the parents was an especially onerous burden and she addresses it in

[109] Renate Howe and Shurlee Swain, "Fertile Grounds for Divorce: Sexuality and Reproductive Imperatives", in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, 167.

[110] Ibid; Marilyn Lake, "Intimate Strangers", in *Making a Life*, ed. Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, *A People's History of Australia since 1788*, 153.

Handfasted, as well as in one of her other novels, *Gathered In*.[111] In *Handfasted*, Liliard observes the injustice of the situation for an illegitimate child as she learns how the outside world would deal with it; the child would inherit nothing, even though "we would love it all the same" as a child born in wedlock (306). Spence also uses the genre of realism to point out the injustice of treating illegitimate children as lesser human beings than those born in wedlock. In *Gathered In*, the plot centres on an intelligent, well-educated Scottish gentleman who is illegitimate. Spence chose to flout the convention in which "the novelist always contrives to prove the birth [of the illegitimate hero or heroine] legal …" as she wrote to a prospective publisher.[112] Spence's hero refuses to try to prove the existence of an irregular Scottish marriage between his parents because of the pain and grief it would cause his father and his "legitimate" family. Spence is generous in her treatment of his parents, whom she sees as weak but honourable, and of the hero, Kenneth Oswald, who overcomes the drawbacks of "having no name and no recognized position"[113] to achieve success in love and a career in Australia. The letter to the *Cornhill Magazine* makes it clear that she understands the economic imperatives behind the unfair treatment of illegitimate children:

> It is the law of inheritance working indirectly on public opinion that makes it less honorable to be descended from parents both weak but not wicked than from one who is a thorough scoundrel and the other a wronged but innocent victim. No doubt the extravagant appreciation of female purity and the indifference as to masculine virtue is fostered by other influences but I think the law of inheritance has great power in the matter.[114]

As noted earlier, many utopian communities that were established in Australia in the nineteenth century reflected patriarchal attitudes towards sexuality. Spence appreciates the difficulty of achieving the kind of society that she imagined in *Handfasted*, expressed in Hugh Keith's comment about the "disturbing elements" present in the wider world, and in Liliard's observation that Columba "was a curious political and social experiment on a

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[111] *Gathered In* was serialised in *The Queenslander*, the *Brisbane Courier*, the *Adelaide Observer* and the *Evening Journal Supplement* in 1881-2, and published as a novel in 1977.

[112] Quoted in B.L. Waters and G.A. Wilkes, Introduction to *Gathered In: A Novel* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1977), viii. All future references are to this edition.

[113] Catherine Helen Spence, *Gathered In*, 232.

[114] Quoted in Waters and Wilkes, Introduction, viii.

small scale under the most favourable circumstances."[115] Yet Spence remains positive about the possibility of change, through the voice of Hugh's grandmother, as she articulates both Spence's realism and her optimism: "… society is not prepared for it [handfasting] yet, though maybe when you are as old as I am, I'll not say what will happen."[116]

Not only did *Handfasted* express different ideas about sexuality in the context of Australian utopias, but it was also different from most other nineteenth-century fictional utopias.[117] Albinski observes the failure by British female utopians to challenge existing institutions and the lack of alternatives they offered to marriage. She suggests that because they wish to enter existing institutions, female utopians tend to be even more conservative than men, who "describe future worlds in which all social institutions *but* marriage have been radically changed."[118] In her emphasis on the relationships between men and women and on sexual equality, Spence harks back to more radical thinkers like the utopian socialists mentioned earlier, who challenged the prevailing sexual morality, as well as institutions surrounding work, family, law and religion. And whether or not the links were conscious, she is recalling the *philosophes* of the French Enlightenment such as Dennis Diderot (1713-84) and the Marquis de Condorcet (1743-94) who also imagined more sexually liberated worlds.

Eighteenth-century France was fertile ground for the consideration of radical ideas about gender and progress, given the social and political ferment that was taking place.[119] Like Spence some 120 years later in colonial Australia, the *philosophes* did not accept the idea of original sin being the cause of humankind's corruption; rather, it was caused by the failings

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[115] Spence, *Handfasted*, 334.

[116] Ibid., 361.

[117] For a discussion about sexuality in *Handfasted* and in William Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise*, see Michele McFarland, "Sexuality in Utopia: Catherine Helen Spence, William Lane and Social Dreaming in Nineteenth-Century Australia," *Australasian Victorian Studies Journal* 8 (2002).

[118] Albinski, *Women's Utopias*, 17.

[119] See, for example, Fox-Genovese, "Women and the Enlightenment", in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. R. Rosenthal (Boston: 1987); Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris*, ch. 1&2.

of society,[120] a construction that found its way into the thinking of Robert Owen and many social reformers of the nineteenth century. If society was to blame for humankind's failings, then women's misery in marriage must be caused by the "cruelty of the civil law … combined with the cruelty of nature," according to Diderot, an idea which led him to "explore the possibility of an ideal society among Rousseau's noble savages."[121] In his *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville*,[122] a fictional extension to Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's 1771 account of his voyage to Tahiti, Diderot depicts a limited form of sexual freedom in a Pacific island paradise in which sexual morality is based on whether or not a country can afford to feed its children. The Tahitian host explains to the visiting French chaplain:

> Are the morals of Tahiti better or worse than yours? … Has the country of thy birth more children than it can feed? In that case the morals are neither better nor worse than ours. Can it feed more than it has? Then our morals are better than thine.[123]

In an abbreviated version of Spence's handfasting, men and women who want to live together must do so for at least a month to ensure that paternity is not in doubt should the couple separate. If they do separate, the child remains with the mother and becomes a part of her dowry for the next relationship. Despite the limited emancipation this scenario offers to women, the fact that it considers the vows made in the name of marriage and priesthood to be unnatural makes it radical. It is easy to imagine that Spence would have felt some rapport with Diderot, as her writing and other activism seem to have been an embodiment of his cry of enthusiasm for the period in which he lived: "I love that philosophy which raises up humanity."[124]

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[120] Neville-Sington and Sington, *Paradise Dreamed*, 137.

[121] Quoted in Neville-Sington and Sington, *Paradise Dreamed*, 143.

This account of Diderot's work is drawn from the Singtons' book, pp. 141-48. For a summary of Diderot's critique of civilisation see Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women."

[122] I was unable to locate a copy of this text in English. It was written by Diderot in 1776, but not published until 1796, after his death.

[123] Quoted in Neville-Sington and Sington, *Paradise Dreamed*, 146-7.

[124] Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment*, vol. 4, *The Pelican History of European Thought* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 233.

Something of the intense rationalism in Spence's *A Week in the Future* can be found in the ideas of another of the *philosophes*. Condorcet's prognostications for a future utopia are based on "rational conduct" becoming "normative behaviour for all mankind."[125] He recognised that the French Revolution was not a revolution for all who wanted or needed change, in that the revolutionaries had

> violated the principle of equality of rights, in tranquilly depriving the half of the human race of that of assisting in the making of laws; in excluding women from the right of citizenship … Either no individual of the human race has genuine rights, or else all have the same; and he who votes against the right of another, whatever the religion, colour, or sex of that other, has henceforth adjured his own.[126]

Advances such as widespread contraception, cures for venereal disease and artificial insemination, combined with the independence of women that would follow from their equality, would contribute to the general good:

> Everything which can contribute to rendering individuals more independent is also a good relative to the happiness which they can reciprocally bestow upon each other; their happiness will be greater when the individual action is more voluntary.[127]

Condorcet's sentiments are reflected in both of Spence's utopias. Although "Spence is reticent about [Columba's] sexual liberation of women," as Albinski observes, "its effect on women's lives, seen mainly in the person of Liliard, is shown by their independence in all areas of life."[128] The sexual equality in *Handfasted*, as well as women's financial independence, contributes to the happiness of all in the society of Columba. There is no trace of that womanly submission that made Marguerite so unhappy in her youth and in her marriage; on the contrary, Liliard is strong-willed, independent and forthright. Decisions are made for reasons of self-interest, and yet selfishness is not prevalent. With rational decision-making the norm and happiness no longer the by-product of a virtue that labours

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[125] Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris*, 97. For a fuller exposition of Condorcet's work, see Manuel, ch. 2.

[126] Quoted in Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, "Overview, 1750-1890", in *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present*, ed. Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 106.

[127] Quoted in Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris*, 99.

[128] Nan Bowman Albinski, "*Handfasted*: An Australian Feminist's American Utopia," *Journal of Popular Culture* 23, no. 2 (1989): 21.

for others, then the "intelligent pursuit of happiness [becomes] the object of life," as Spence writes in *A Week in the Future*.[129]

Similarities between Fourier's and Spence's views about relations between men and women revolve around sexual freedom for both sexes, although Spence depicts relationships that are a long way from Fourier's "progressive household"; as a believer in monogamy she would have felt the sexual freedom he advocated to be destructive to society. Fourier also uses a different kind of language (at least as seen in the translation) in referring to "the right to take lovers," but basically they are not so far apart:

> Women in Civilisation would be divided into two classes: maidens below the age of eighteen, and emancipated women over the age of eighteen. At that age they would acquire the right to take lovers, subject to laws which would have to be passed about the fate of children born to such unions.[130]

This is resonant of Spence's depiction of the concept of handfasting or trial marriages in *Handfasting*. By making it compulsory for both men and women to participate in trial marriages before marriage from an early age, with no penalties to either sex for the end of the relationship and no stigma attaching to any offspring or to women, Spence eliminated much of the sexual double standard of the nineteenth century, and deprecated the interpretation that virginity and chastity were measures of a woman's worth. She was able to see a world in which morality had no sex, much as Mary Wollstonecraft envisioned a world that only had one standard of human virtue. By contrast to her utopian proposal for a form of sexual freedom in *Handfasted*, in the 1880s she advocated social purity which demanded that men behave as chastely as women were expected to. In a speech to the Social Purity Society reported in the *South Australian Register* in September 1885, she wanted women to "endeavour to promote purity, nobleness and unselfishness" in everything they said and did, and to "discountenance the shameful liver though he might be rich and of supposed good social standing."[131] Perhaps she felt the real world of nineteenth-century Adelaide was not quite ready for any amount of sexual freedom to be publicly advocated,

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[129] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 68.

[130] Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements*, 133.

[131] "The Social Purity Society," *South Australian Register*, 8 September 1885.

especially by a woman and one who was as well-known as she was by this time. At the same time, she shows her willingness to condemn the men who behaved promiscuously while avoiding any endorsement of the double standard.

Spence could occasionally appear to support the sexual double standard, however. In a letter to the editor of the *Argus* in 1908, she promoted the establishment of Lock hospitals or Magdalene wards in hospitals to treat women suffering from venereal disease. Far from demanding the withdrawal of the state from intervention in women's lives, as Josephine Butler did in England, Spence suggests that "such women arrested for drunkenness" should be given an indeterminate sentence, "as is now obtaining for habitual drunkards," so that they can be treated for venereal disease.[132] In Australia, the colonies of Tasmania, Queensland and Victoria had passed similar laws, although Victoria had not implemented them. Meg Arnot suggests the reason for this was that the real point of the legislation was to ensure that men had sexual access to disease-free women; because venereal disease did not discriminate between sexes or classes the legislation was futile.[133] Spence's claim in the same letter, therefore, that she did not support compulsory examination, one of the central parts of the British legislation and responsible for much of the ire of feminists, seems inconsistent with the demands in her letter, which seems to propose a circuitous route to the same ends. Interestingly, she uses none of Butler's arguments against the double standard, arguments which would have been well-known by the time she wrote this letter, given that the Contagious Diseases Acts had been repealed in 1886, and instead focuses on that small group of women whose detention would have been pointless in avoiding the spread of disease.[134]

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[132] Catherine Helen Spence, "A Health Question," letter to the *Argus*, 20 June 1908, p.17.

[133] Meg Arnot, "The Oldest Profession in a New Britannia", in *Constructing a Culture*, ed. Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, *A People's History of Australia since 1788*, 51.

[134] See Caine, *English Feminism*, ch.2. for details of the campaign against the CD Acts and Josephine Butler's role in it. For Butler's thoughts on the issue, see Josephine Butler, *A Letter to the International Convention of Women at Washington from Josephine Butler* (Victorian Women Writers' Project, 1998 1888 [sighted 2 September 2000]); available from www.indiana.edu/~letrs/vwwp; Josephine Butler, *Social Purity* (Victorian Women Writers' Project, 1996 1879 [sighted 15 May 2000]); available from http://www.indiana.edu/~letrs/vwwp/.

Spence's support for monogamy fitted with her belief in the "sacred" nature of marriage, whose permanency, she believed, promoted "repose and hope and trust" and built up "the family in the purest, the most loving, and the most secure manner."[135] Although the idea of handfasting was radical in some ways, especially in its implications for sexual equality, one of the reasons that Marguerite Keith offers for its introduction to Columba was her belief that marriage should last for life. She saw the social arrangements that accompanied courtship in eighteenth-century Scotland as insufficient for men and women to know if they were suited for marriage, a problem she was familiar with from her own experience. In Columba, therefore, both sexes are given great freedom in the subjects they can discuss with each other and are not inhibited by chaperoning arrangements as the young Marguerite had been. Handfasting and its prelude became a way of ensuring that couples knew each other well enough before marriage so that "there was far more prospect of it being kept sacred."[136]

Thus, in spite of her personal rejection of marriage, Spence supported it as an institution that worked for the stability of society, as did many mid-Victorian feminists and even some of the feminists involved in the New Woman debate of the late nineteenth century. The mid-Victorians fought for marriage reform in terms of property and child custody rights, but they still accepted, as Barbara Caine notes, "that individual marriages and 'true' marriages based on love could be happy ones."[137] John Stuart Mill, who regarded marriage as potentially a form of legal slavery of women, saw "all opinions, customs and institutions" which favoured alternatives to his idealised notion of marriage as "relics of primitive barbarism."[138] While there were some rebels like Barbara Bodichon and Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy, who fought to enter into unconventional relationships with men, it was not until the 1890s that a wider range of public opinion was expressed on the subject. And even then one of the most outspoken New Woman writers on the double standard,

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[135] Catherine Helen Spence, "Marriage Rights and Wrongs," *South Australian Register*, 15 July 1878. Repr. Thomson, ed., *Catherine Helen Spence*, 503.

[136] Spence, *Handfasted*, 201.

[137] Caine, *English Feminism*, 137.

[138] Mill, "The Subjection of Women", 235-6.

Sarah Grand, believed that "marriage is the most sacred institution in the world and it is better not to interfere with it."[139]

Marriage may have been sacred to Spence, but she was also realistic enough to argue that there were grounds for making divorce more easily accessible. In *Handfasted*, divorce is not mentioned, presumably because it is unnecessary in a utopia that follows the practice of handfasting. The inhabitants of the future in *A Week in the Future* have recognised the problems associated with marriages which continue "after all the love and honor had died out," seeing them as cruel, degrading and demoralizing (96). Accordingly, divorce is easy, particularly when there are no children. It becomes a little more complicated when there are children involved, but, as Lesley Ljungdahl observes, "Spence's solutions to difficulties are often superficial, as in the equal division of children between divorcing spouses … [which] completely ignores the human dimensions of the problem …."[140] What was important, however, was Spence's desire for change, along with that of a number of feminists, to divorce laws that gave men the right to divorce their wives on grounds of adultery alone, while for women to sue for divorce, adultery had to be accompanied by other sins such as bigamy, cruelty, desertion, incest, rape or unnatural offences.[141] By making divorce equally accessible to both men and women, she promotes the idea that society overall is improved. She also used the mainstream media to propose change to divorce laws. In an 1878 article in the *Register*, Spence suggests that divorce on the grounds of cruelty should be possible, without also having to prove adultery, as was the case in New South Wales and Victoria until 1889 and 1890 respectively. She also argues that insanity in a partner when there appears to be no hope of recovery should be potential grounds for divorce.[142] In another example of her often inconsistent attitudes, however, she wrote in the same article that "public opinion as expressed in the law is yet considerably behind the educated intelligence

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[139] "Sarah Grand on Men and Women," *Review of Reviews*, 15 April 1896, p.245.

[140] Ljungdahl, Prologue, 15.

[141] See Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1959): 201-3.

[142] Spence, "Marriage Rights and Wrongs." Repr. Thomson, ed., *Catherine Helen Spence*, 502.

of the age" in relation to the legal double standard, yet she also notes that "there can be no question that adultery is a greater offence in a wife than a husband."[143]

Spence saw faults with the institution of marriage and offered a limited utopian alternative, but she accepted it as the foundation of an orderly and stable society. The best that women could do was to marry for love and companionship, rather than for reasons of financial security or status. Henrietta Dugdale, in *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age*, expresses similar views about marriage being a life-long companionate relationship based on mutual respect, although she was more explicit about equality being a necessary element. This "loving and most honorable bond" must be based on an equality that does not reward one partner by virtue of their sex only, according to Dugdale:

> so long as law makes one sex dominant … there can reign nothing but disaster everywhere. For the offspring of marriage under such iniquitous laws can only be so much increase to the injustice, deceit, oppression, and all degrading wrongs which have polluted … communities … throughout the whole world. For noble happiness to exist between wife and husband there must be perfect equality of world power.[144]

Like Spence, another utopian novelist William Lane saw a commitment to monogamy as necessary, although his predominant motivation was the continuation of the white "race." In *The Workingman's Paradise*, Lane recognises marriage as an iniquitous and oppressive institution for women, but of considerable benefit to men. The stereotypical bushman's life was "aimless and hopeless," according to Nellie the female hero, "born of unnatural surroundings."[145] Ned, the bushman-hero, foresees a future for himself "aged too soon, wifeless and childless, racked with rheumatism …."[146] As for women, Lane's New Order would bring women sexual autonomy because they would marry for love only; with their material needs secured, Lane argued, women would be treated "not as servants but as sisters", "equals" not slaves.[147] It would seem that monogamy and marriage were not

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[143] Spence, "Marriage Rights and Wrongs." Thomson, ed., *Catherine Helen Spence*, 500.

[144] Dugdale, *A Few Hours*, 66.

[145] Lane, *Workingman's Paradise*, 135.

[146] Ibid., 50.

[147] Quoted in Bruce Scates, "Socialism and Feminism, the Case of William Lane: A Reply to Marilyn Lake," *Labour History* 59 (1990): 54.

regarded as outmoded in late nineteenth-century Australia even by feminist utopians; on the contrary, they were integral to maintaining a balance between order and progress. It was a different story, however, when it came to women's suffrage in the 1890s, for change was most definitely in the air.

The contrasting circumstances between women in Australia and England were evident from the time of the early colonial era. While women convicts were regarded as "particularly degraded," in New South Wales both single and married women were granted land for farming upon emancipation, as well as being entitled to leases on town land.[148] This degree of economic independence was certainly not accompanied by equal citizenship, but it does indicate a difference between Australia and England in attitudes to women by authorities. The first calls for votes for women in Australia came in 1842 from the *The Teetotaller*; according to Rita Farrell, "its claims were based on justice and the moral superiority of women rather than on the rights of women as property holders."[149] For the next forty or so years, the issue of women's suffrage was virtually non-existent in Australia, even when women were excluded from "universal" suffrage in the 1850s in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. There was one anonymous protestor, however, who wrote eloquently in support of women's suffrage to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 2 July 1858, in language that was echoed in John Stuart Mill's speech to the British House of Commons in 1867. She proposes that if it can be "shown that women have no claim - that because of a physical inferiority … they ought for ever to be classed politically with idiots, lunatics, traitors, and felons, all of whom are alike incapable of the franchise" then she would "abandon [herself] to contented darning for all time to come …."[150] Mill argued similarly that the opportunity to vote would mean that women "would no longer be classed with

[148] Rita Farrell, "Women and Citizenship in Colonial Australia", in *Women as Australian Citizens: Underlying Histories*, ed. Patricia Crawford and Philippa Maddern (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 123.

[149] Ibid., 119. See also Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[150] Quoted in Grimshaw, Janson, and Quartly, eds., *Freedom Bound I: Documents on Women in Colonial Australia*, 64. This letter is one of only four protesting about women's exclusion discovered in the major colonial papers of the period 1840-1860, according to Grimshaw et al.

children, idiots, and lunatics, as incapable of taking care of themselves or others and needing that everything should be done for them, without asking their consent."[151]

If the 1860s in Australia produced little home-grown dissent on the matter of women's suffrage, many were active in England. Mill, Frances Power Cobbe, Barbara Bodichon, Millicent Garrett Fawcett and others were writing letters to newspapers and making speeches about women's suffrage in England, where the suffrage campaign had begun in the late 1860s. The London group was very much oriented to and organised by middle-class women, an exception being Mill who was president of the London National Society for Women's Suffrage for several years. The range of politicians involved varied from conservative to radical, which necessitated compromises such as excluding votes for married women. Even then success was delayed until 1917 when women over the age of thirty were granted the vote. Full equality in terms of voting took until 1928.[152] The situation was similar in America, where the campaign for women's suffrage had begun in the 1860s, but by the end of the century, "little headway was being made in the state or the federal systems."[153] Women eventually gained the national vote in America in 1920.

While it is true to say that the level of activism in England and America did not translate into votes for women for some time, the reverse was true in Australia. Although there was little in the way of activity in the 1860s, women received the vote, at least in some colonies, much earlier than in the other countries.[154] In 1873, George Higinbotham proposed the enfranchisement of women in Victoria, arguing that "at the present day, politics and politicians were gradually becoming more and more separated from the social and civil life

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[151] Patricia Hollis, *Women in Public 1850 - 1900: Documents of the Victorian Women's Movement* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), 301. See also chapter one of Michele McFarland, "Sarah Grand and the Idea of the New Woman" (Honours, University of Ballarat, 2000).

[152] For histories of the women's suffrage movement in Britain, see Caine, *English Feminism;* Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us. The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Virago, 1978); Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (1928), ed. (London: Virago, 1988).

[153] Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia* , 9.

[154] For reasons behind Australian women gaining the right to vote before British and American women, see Ibid., 212-7.

of communities than they were in former times," so that giving political power to women would "in proportion as the right was valued and exercised … [lead to] more human, just and liberal views of politics [being] entertained throughout the length and breadth of the land."[155] In Spence's home state of South Australia, Edward Stirling, a friend of Spence's and member of the South Australian parliament, had proposed granting the franchise to women in 1885, but it was not taken seriously. Likewise, his introduction of a bill for female suffrage in 1886 was rejected.[156] After that, the issue gained increased support and momentum, with the result that South Australian women gained the vote in 1894, the first colony in Australia to do so and thirty-four years before British women received the same level of political equality.

Spence's position on the issue had been ambivalent until the early 1890s. As was the case with other intellectual women such as George Eliot and Anna Jameson,[157] women's suffrage was not one of her early concerns. Rather than being caused by a lack of awareness, the delay in her involvement until the early 1890s was due to her belief that the implementation of proportional representation was more important; as she notes in her autobiography, "[I] was not eager for the doubling of electors in number, especially as the new voters would probably be more ignorant and more apathetic than the old."[158] She also appeared to subscribe to the argument put forward by many anti-suffragists in England that women were not interested in obtaining the vote, although the reasons for women's lack of engagement are, in her view, mainly to do with discouragement by men:

> women do not wish [for the vote], partly because they dread the responsibility, partly because they care little about politics either abstract or practical, but mainly because the other sex, by which they are so largly influenced, discourage and ridicule the strong-minded women who are eager for political rights …. [159]

[155] Quoted in Grimshaw, Janson, and Quartly, eds., *Freedom Bound I: Documents on Women in Colonial Australia*, 91-3.

[156] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 174-7. Chapter 8 of Magarey's book provides a detailed history of the gaining of the vote for women in South Australia. See also Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia* , ch.2.

[157] Re Jameson's views, see Johnston, *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters*, 221-2.

[158] Spence, *Autobiography*, 41.

[159] A Colonist of 1839, "The Social Outlook for the Future," *Register*, repr. *Catherine Helen Spence*, edited by Helen Thomson, 545.

As well as these more general reasons for avoiding the issue, she felt that maintaining the appearance of impartiality on the matter of female suffrage would give her more credibility in relation to her campaign for proportional representation:

> I felt that absolute disinterestedness was the only line for me to take [so that] no one could accuse or suspect me of any personal ambition or interest … when I urged that the votes of the qualified men who are supposed to represent the women should be equitably allocated.[160]

This is consistent with her concern for improving society for all, rather than for a particular group, and was not all that different from George Eliot's attitude to the extension of the franchise. Eliot felt that without women receiving the appropriate moral and social education, female suffrage would be "an extremely doubtful good," while extending the vote to working-class men ran the risk "that they would cut loose from their roots and degenerate into a selfish mob."[161] Spence never dropped her support for proportional representation, although her activism faded somewhat in the 1870s and 1880s.

Despite her relatively conservative position on women's political equality prior to the 1890s, Spence offers some advance to women in terms of political equality in *Handfasted*: widows and handfasted women who are landholders and heads of families are able to vote, presumably because married women, even in utopia, had no separate legal existence. Although women, like men, are given land grants when they turn twenty-one so that the problem of financial dependence for single women is largely eliminated, Spence fails to extend other modes of independence to married women. She offers the vote to the same categories of women that Mill did, in spite of the fact that she knew Helen Taylor, Mill's step-daughter, had argued that he had been illogical in requesting a restricted vote for women. His response, according to Spence (writing in 1909-10) was meek: "Well, perhaps I have made a mistake, but I thought a property qualification would awake less antagonism."[162] *A Week in the Future*, written nine years later, seems even less interested in

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[160] C.H. Spence, "Woman's Suffrage and Effective Voting – A Paper read at a Drawing-Room Meeting at Glenelg," *The Voice*, 9 December 1892.

[161] Quoted in Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 369.

[162] Spence, *Autobiography*, 41-2.

female suffrage – there is no discussion of the details of elections, nor does she mention the gender of parliamentarians in her visit to parliament.

Women's suffrage did become an important cause for her by the 1890s, especially after her visit to America and meetings with feminists such as Susan B. Anthony. By 1892, she was taking credit for guiding the movement, declaring that "the woman's suffrage movement in this province has … become too strong for me to keep outside of it any longer. I must take hold of it, and endeavour to guide it somewhat."[163] However, as Susan Magarey notes, "she did not attempt to direct, or even 'guide' the suffrage campaign. Rather she offered it substantial support."[164] It is possible that Spence is steering clear of controversy in her utopian novels, allowing readers to assume whatever they like, although this appears unlikely in the case of *Handfasted*. Not only was it not published in the nineteenth century, and therefore unable to provoke controversy, but it includes what was arguably a far more radical social change in handfasting. What is more likely is that she really was not interested in the struggle in South Australia for the vote for women at the time she wrote these novels. Family illness and death during the late 1880s reduced her public activities considerably, and it was not until 1891 that she first attended a meeting of the Women's Suffrage League (W.S.L.), increasing her involvement from then on.[165] By this time, she no longer had the same access to the pages of newspapers as a journalist, although her high public profile in relation to proportional representation meant she received considerable coverage for her lectures on that subject.[166] Her speeches after she returned from her overseas trip to Europe and America in 1894 often included references to female suffrage and there is no doubt that her support helped the cause considerably; as Magarey observes, "she was a powerful recruit," praised by members of the W.S.L. and politicians and the press.[167] She went on to use her influence and voice to argue for the discontinuation of the

[163] C.H. Spence, "Woman's Suffrage and Effective Voting."

[164] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 182.

[165] Ibid., 181-2.

[166] Details of the coverage of Spence's lecture tours for Proportional Representation between January and April 1893 are in Wall, *Catherine Helen Spence* .

[167] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 182.

anomaly in which men and women of only two states voted in the first federal election, writing that "the grand democratic basis of the Commonwealth constitution of 'one man one vote,' needs to be expanded into 'one adult one vote' …: "while half of the human race is shut out of public activities, no one can call the government really democratic." [168]

She was proud of the fact that South Australia was the first colony to give women the vote, and attributed this achievement to the positive relationships between men and women. She attributes the reasons for success in gaining the vote for women in Australia to Australian male colonists being "conscious of the service of their helpmates, and grateful for it," as well as to the founding of South Australia on the Wakefield system, "where the sexes were almost equal in number, and the immigration … mainly that of families."[169] As well as pride, there is an acknowledgement here of the chivalry that Spence's feminist colleague, Vida Goldstein, observed about Australian men, particularly working-class men, whom she regarded as supportive in the fight for women's suffrage.[170] This is a different view from that of more contemporary feminists who have argued that a masculinist hostility to feminism characterised the late nineteenth century, as Barbara Caine notes.[171]

Although Spence was the first female political candidate in Australia, campaigning for election in 1897 to the federal convention that was to discuss federation, Spence's utopias do not overturn the patriarchy and explicitly imagine women holding positions of power in a democratically elected parliament, as some women's utopias such as Annie Denton Cridge's *Man's Rights* did. Even Marguerite in *Handfasted*, with all the authority she wields in defining the new society of Columba has to share power with ; they do not depict

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[168] Catherine Helen Spence, *Woman's Place in the Commonwealth* (University of Sydney, 3 December 2002 1900 [sighted 21 December 2001]); available from http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/setis/id/fed0047.

[169] Spence, *Autobiography*, 42.

[170] See Barbara Caine, "Vida Goldstein and the English Militants", in *The Woman Question in England and Australia*, ed. Barbara Caine (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1994), 151-3. Jill Roe analyses the effects of chivalry on women's suffrage and social welfare in early twentieth century Australia in Jill Roe, "Chivalry and Social Policy in the Antipodes," *Historical Studies* 22, no. 88 (1987).

[171] Caine, "Vida Goldstein and the English Militants", 153. See, for example, Marilyn Lake, "The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context" (1986), in *Debutante Nation*, ed. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, and Susan Sheridan .

shared political power. Again, this might be due to a desire to avoid controversy, given that there was apparently widespread fear in the ranks of parliamentarians at the thought of women entering parliament - the prospect "seemed to frighten most nineteenth-century parliamentarians out of their wits."[172] It could also relate to her reluctance to be aligned with a particular political party, a position taken by large numbers of Australian suffragists, according to Audrey Oldfield. Some disliked the party system altogether, while others felt that women could be more powerful as a lobbying force for women if unaligned.[173]

Spence's later position was evident in her presidency of the Women's Non-Party Political Association, formed in South Australia in 1909 by Lucy Morice, Spence's niece, with advice from Vida Goldstein. Known as the "Women's Non-Party," this was a body whose aim was "the removal of all social, economic and other inequalities which still existed between women and men."[174] Spence saw it as providing the means by which women would be educated enough to work with men to "help in the solution of social problems that are now obstacles in the path of progress."[175] She had become firm in her view that women's more direct participation in government would improve society but was still not able to imagine men and women sharing power equally. In an article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1894, "An Australian's Impression of America," she envisages, for America at least, two separate houses of government: one "a Parliament of men elected by men" and the other "a council of women chosen by women."[176] There is nothing which the classes can contribute to the masses so valuable as the best thought of woman to aid the best thought of man."[177] Spence's proposed structure expresses her attitudes to both women

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[172] Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia* , 178.

[173] Ibid.

[174] See Helen Jones, "Lucy Spence Morice and Catherine Helen Spence: Partners in South Australian Social Reform," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 11 (1983): 56-61; Lucy Spence Morice, "Auntie Kate," in *South Australian Archives*, ed. (Adelaide: n.d.).

Quoted in Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 187.

[175] Spence, *Autobiography*, 100.

[176] This idea of a council of women was borrowed from Mrs Fay Peirce, a political activist whom Spence met during her American visit. See entries for 16th and 20th March in Spence's diary for 1894.

[177] Spence, "An Australian's Impressions of America," 250.

and the idea of majority-rule: women can make a valuable contribution to government but one that is perhaps different from that of men, while the educated classes should assist in raising up the masses because they have the power and the ability to do so.

Spence's attitude towards female suffrage until the 1890s was similar to her attitude towards extending the male franchise under the current electoral system, which she believed excluded the political voice of those who were in a minority. Proportional representation, through preferential voting and the voluntary combination of interest groups as constituencies, would allow every elector's vote to count, instead of the majority having a right to their representative, and the minority having no representative at all.[178] Until the system was changed, she felt that there was no point in extending the franchise. She did not wish to limit the suffrage, however, for she wanted "every man to have a vote and to use it, for it is the most valuable element of education and progress that every man should feel his weight in the state."[179] She might have been out of step with the British suffragists of the 1860s and the Australians of the 1880s, but her sympathies were consistent with her abiding belief in the importance of progress for society overall.

South Australia was to be the site of the great experiment in pure democracy, "a fit place for initiating that radical reform of enfranchising minorities which … must be brought about, if we mean to make any progress at all in the civilised world."[180] Believing in the idea of democracy as she perceived it to have worked in the ancient Greek republics, she was influenced by British thinkers such as Thomas Hare and John Stuart Mill, and less by nineteenth-century feminist ideas. As far as women were concerned, other ways of improving their position were more important, such as obtaining a useful education and improved access to employment, a point that she makes in several of her novels. Gaining sexual equality was another way, but public discussions of this issue were more likely to

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[178] See Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, ch.7; Spence, *A Plea for Pure Democracy. Mr Hare's Reform Bill Applied to South Australia*.

[179] Spence, *A Plea for Pure Democracy*, 5.

[180] Ibid., iv.

offend delicate middle-class Victorian sensibilities, as proved by the rejection of *Handfasted*.

A feminist position on women's political rights was articulated by one of the few female utopian writers in late nineteenth-century Australia, Henrietta Dugdale, an eccentric Victorian suffragist, who was a member of the Eclectic Association, an organisation which had discussed the Woman Question in the early 1870s and again in the 1880s.[181] Dugdale dedicated her didactic utopian novel, *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age* (1883), to George Higinbotham "in earnest admiration for the brave attacks made by that gentleman upon … the greatest obstacle to human advancement … male ignorance."[182] This dedication is probably a fair indicator of the radical nature of her feminism.

In one of her many tirades about men's oppression of women in *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age*, Dugdale calls on the women of the present to learn and think so that they will be able to make laws for themselves, because "man has neither the *right* nor the *ability* to make laws in which the happiness and health of our lives are concerned, unless with our co-operation."[183] The transitional period between the nineteenth century and the marvellous new world of the future, which is represented in a museum as the "Christian Era, or Age of Blood," reveals some participation by women in government, although women senators debate by themselves in their own chamber. The utopian guide explains this arrangement as possibly the result of men's "comical vanity," or a desire by women for quiet as "the men [were] notorious in those days for their silly quarrels and irrelevant chatter."[184] The future world is governed by both men and women who are highly-evolved and highly-educated – like everyone in this society. Although she does not discuss the mechanics of how political power is obtained, it is safe to assume that women have the vote, given Dugdale's admiration for Higinbotham and her own activism on behalf of women's suffrage.

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[181] For more on the Eclectic Association, see note p. 31.

[182] Dugdale, *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age.*.

[183] Ibid., 49.

[184] Ibid., 9.

Such a feminist approach makes use of what Anne Cranny-Francis refers to as the "literature of estrangement," which she defines as "a literature concerned primarily with alienation experienced by individual subjects, realized textually by a setting displaced in time and/or space."[185] While it is also a way of describing much utopian fiction written by men in the nineteenth century, the alienation exposed in women's writing tends to be quite different from that in men's writing. Generally speaking, the female heroes of nineteenth-century British women's utopian fiction become estranged from the patriarchally-structured society in which all institutions – legal, political, cultural and social – are dominated by men.[186] According to Nan Bowman Albinski, they create new societies in which co-operation, rather than competition, is the rule, where women participate equally in, if they do not dominate, society's institutions, where divorce is easy, and where men, if they still exist, acquire less aggressive, more companionable characteristics. Marriage, if it is not eliminated altogether, consists of a partnership of a New Man and New Woman who enter utopia as highly-evolved human beings and equal companions.[187] This is the kind of marriage that Spence depicts in her utopias, and she, too, promotes cooperation over competition. However, she differs considerably from her British sisters when it comes to women's relationship with many patriarchal institutions: rather than being estranged from them, the women in Spence's utopias participate in society, if not in government, on a more or less equal basis. Not only does this approach affirm her humanist concerns for the progress of all human beings, it also reflects her desire for non-revolutionary means of achieving change. It also reflects her positive experience of migration to a colony founded

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[185] Anne Cranny-Francis, *Feminist Fiction: Feminist Uses of Generic Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 2.

[186] For discussions of nineteenth-century British women's utopian fiction, see Albinski, *Women's Utopias;* Lewes, *Dream Revisionaries;* Daphne Patai, "British and American Utopias by Women (1836-1979): An Annotated Bibliography, Part 1," *Alternative Futures: The Journal of Utopian Studies* 2, no. 3 (1981).

[187] The fictional utopias of nineteenth-century American women, according to Nan Bowman Albinski, are less concerned with addressing women's inability to participate in public life and more inclined towards transformation of women's social, rather than political, lives. Their societies are religiously-based, rather than secular or even socialist, like those of their British counterparts, and a "vigorous individualism" permits change to occur almost immediately, unlike the gradual evolutionary societies of English utopians. Albinski, *Women's Utopias*, 4.

on the utopian theory of systematic colonisation, and her appreciation of the opportunity to pursue a public life which may not have been possible in Britain.

Interestingly, however, neither of Spence's utopian texts is set in Australia. In choosing to travel to London, Emily sees the older country as being in greater need of change than a younger one such as Australia, but it also offers the benefit of familiarity: as she says, "I need all my past knowledge to throw light on the new revelations. The language, the literature, the history and the traditions of England are among my most cherished possessions."[188] It is also possible that Spence felt the international settings of Central America and London would increase the stories' appeal and therefore find a wider audience. She did become frustrated by the difficulty in getting her novels published, although some were serialised in Australian newspapers, and then by their failure to sell well enough to earn her a decent income, all of which gave her a good understanding of the difficulties of colonial writers; as Ken Stewart notes of the period before the 1890s, "to publish a book in the colonies was risky and expensive, owing to high productions costs …, a small market, and the appeal of established British authors and of 'home' as subject matter."[189] Spence attributed her difficulties at least partially to the fact that "there was no market for literary work" in spite of the prospect of Australia becoming "a great country."[190] But obtaining publication in England was no easy matter either. In her autobiography Spence expresses surprise at the fact that her more realistic novels, such as *Clara Morison* and *Mr Hogarth's Will*, were published in England: "if stories are excessively Australian they lose the sympathies of the bulk of the public. If they are mildly Australian, the work is thought to lack distinctiveness."[191] Given the fact, however, that *Handfasted* was to be submitted to an Australian newspaper, an Australian setting might have worked in her favour.

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[188] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 24.

[189] Stewart, "Journalism and the World of the Writer", 179. See also Webby, "Writers, Printers, Readers."

[190] Spence, *Autobiography*, 23.

[191] Ibid., 64.

Spence may have also been following in the footsteps of other women who wrote geographically-displaced utopias such as Elizabeth Corbett and Annie Denton Cridge,[192] who rejected the possibility of transforming society *in situ*. By establishing a settler society in a remote region inhabited by Indians, it becomes easier for the female founder, Marguerite, to assume the power of the matriarch. If *Handfasted*'s utopia had been located in a future Australia or England, already existing patriarchal structures might have prevented such innovative and transgressive social changes as handfasting. Indeed, the institutional structures surrounding relationships between men and women in *A Week in the Future* are not as radically altered as they are in Columba, with more emphasis placed on broad economic and social matters. What makes the sexually egalitarian nature of Columba possible is the starting afresh by the settlers, who are able to establish new norms to suit an environment very different from eighteenth-century Scotland, and the power and authority assumed by Marguerite. By the end of the novel, Spence abandons the idea that such radical change can work in the larger, more complex outside world, but by suggesting the possibility that men and women can live harmoniously without the strictures surrounding nineteenth-century marriage and sexuality, she puts the case for a different kind of progress for society: as Helen Thomson argues, Spence's "commonsense realism" suggests "there is nothing in human nature which forbids the replacement of a faulty society with a better organised one."[193]

Spence's use of the romance-realist form in her early novels gave her the opportunity to express her ideas about how some aspects of society might change for the better for women. Those genres, however, imposed limitations on how she might express her increasingly less conservative views about relationships between men and women, with her move to utopian fiction indicating, as Helen Thomson suggests, "Spence's developing awareness of the need for women to abandon the restrictions, and the seductive pleasures, too, of the private

[192] Elizabeth T. Corbett, "My Visit to Utopia" (1869), in *Daring to Dream: Utopian Stories by United States Women, 1836-1919*, ed. Carol Farley Kessler (Boston: Pandora Press, 1984), 65-73; Annie Denton Cridge, "Man's Rights; or, How Would You Like It?" (1870), in *Daring to Dream, 74-94*.

[193] Thomson, Afterword, 378.

sphere, the usual point of closure in romantic fiction."[194] Realism also required restraint if Spence desired to conform to George Eliot's dictum that novels should be "a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind."[195] Thus, having examined some aspects of the issue of women's rights in her romance-realist novels early in her career, she later chose the genre of utopian fiction, I would suggest, as a more effective way of representing her changing position on women's rights.

Spence's rationalism ensures she does not allow the elements of what is often an unrealistic and fantastic genre to dominate the story in *Handfasted*. There are drawbacks to Columba, despite its achievement of what the narrator calls "perfect freedom in matters of love and marriage to every member of the community" (229). In many respects Columba is democratic and egalitarian but, unfortunately, it is governed by "blockheads," a situation which is ascribed to the imperfect type of democracy that exists there. In a reference to Spence's own enthusiasm for proportional representation in which minorities would be allowed an effective say in government, the narrator (Hugh Keith) observes that:

> this sensible, intelligent well-bred people appeared in every way to be superior to their rulers…[A]s we have seen in America and the Australian colonies, democracy does not choose the wisest and the best of citizens. Democracy thoroughly carried out, as we have hitherto seen it practised, tends to abridge the sphere of Government action, and to make people fussy in a narrow sphere (84).

The colony's egalitarianism means that there are "no giants and no dwarves," but its isolation, its lack of spirituality and humour and physical want have also meant that art, literature, architecture or music have not developed as the community has grown. There has been progress in the areas of material and sexual satisfaction but the big question that Spence seems to be asking is "is this enough?" It is the classic utopian paradox: in a society with no conflict or sadness or want, human nature seems unable to achieve its maximum potential.

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[194] Thomson, "Catherine Helen Spence: Suffragist at Last".

[195] Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ch.17.

What Spence offers in *Handfasted* that is missing from her romance-realist novels is a more expansive view of what a woman's life could be. Through the characters of Liliard and Marguerite and their interactions with both Columba and the outside world, she shows us the possibilities for women and for society when equality between men and women is implemented. Intelligent and independent, Liliard is the woman that Hugh chooses to be with in the non-utopian world; he sees her as a woman of genius, even "above him in genius" (123). She is the ideal kind of new woman for the new world of nineteenth-century Melbourne, far superior in Hugh's eyes to the "washed out and almost emaciated" New York women with their polished and refined manners. Her intelligence, honesty and strength of character are the qualities she brings with her, and although her character fades into the background somewhat after she suffers a bout of smallpox, and marriage and children become the central elements in her life, we are still left with a sense of her strength. The transition from the sheltered equality of Columba, founded by an inspired matriarch, to the painful realities of the sexual double standard and patriarchal structure of nineteenth-century Australia will not be an easy one, but a sense of humour, "learned in mixing with the world," allows her "to find relief from its pathos and its tragedy" (360). She finds strength, too, from the development of her spiritual nature.

In *Handfasted*, Spence demonstrates the consequences of the kind of utopia that might result when a woman disillusioned by a patriarchal upbringing and marriage has a significant influence on ideology and customs. She imagines a geographically isolated world that exists in the nineteenth century but which has adopted ways of living that solve their unique problems. The history of sexual relations over the previous one hundred years is imagined away, with the result that there is no sexual double standard. For the protagonist, Hugh Keith, and the reader, the present "real" world becomes defamiliarised, exposing the flaws and contradictions evident in the dominant ideology concerning gender relations. If it had been published in the nineteenth century, it is possible that *Handfasted* would have served as one of the "thought-provoking catalysts whose value is in their shock

effect on readers" that Peter Ruppert sees as the function of utopias.[196] From a twenty-first century point of view, it is not radical: it does not depart from the heterosexual, monogamous model, for example, but, by removing the burden of sexual guilt from women, as Helen Thomson argues, Spence "frees them from the curse they [have] borne since Eve's acceptance of the apple from the serpent…branded the female as the cause of the Fall."[197] In removing the sexual double standard that contributed to women's subordination, Spence highlights the normative nature of patriarchal ideology, and the positive effects of a more equal relationship between men and women. She also concludes, however, that such change is unlikely to solve all the problems of society as becomes evident in *A Week in the Future*. This evolved society reflects some of the broader changes required in political, economic and religious institutions in order to achieve progress, but it nevertheless presumes a high degree of gender equality. Spence uses the utopian genre to articulate many of the shortcomings in gender relationships in existing society and to argue for and against faith in utopian solutions in general. The rationalism apparent in her approach to such matters was no doubt influenced by the unusual nature of her religious faith, whose affinities with the idea of progress and feminism are discussed in the following chapter.

[196] Peter Ruppert, *Reader in a Strange Land: The Activity of Reading Literary Utopias* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), xiii.

[197] Thomson, Afterword, 378.

Chapter 4 Faith, Doubt and Humanism

In the nineteenth century, religion was central to the ways in which most people viewed the world and lived their lives; it occupied in Victorian England, as Joseph Altholz observes, “a place in the public consciousness, a centrality in the intellectual life of the age, which it had not had a century before and did not retain in the twentieth century.”[1] And so it was for Catherine Spence. By 1839, however, she had departed from Victorian Britain, at least geographically, and was living in Australia where her British origins continued to influence her views but were affected to some extent by her new environment. Her opinions about women’s role in public and private life, about how men and women could evolve into good citizens, about the role and function of government and educational institutions, how literature and work could assist in the creation of a good society, and of the value of cooperation over competition were inextricably linked to her moral and ethical values, which were the result, at least in part, of the evolution of her religious convictions. An important factor in her thinking was the influence of a number of mainly British intellectuals, whose doubts about orthodox religion bore some resemblance to Spence’s questioning of her early faith, as well as the nature of Unitarianism, whose traditions were both radical and conservative. Her opinions were conservative in some respects, but relatively radical in others, and were representative of the effects of the religious changes occurring during the nineteenth century in Britain and Australia. Through a study of her fiction and non-fiction, this chapter will explore the significance of Spence’s religious beliefs and doubts in the construction of her role as a public intellectual in nineteenth-century Australia, placing them in the context of developments in British and Australian religious life.

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[1] Josef L. Altholz, "The Warfare of Conscience with Theology", in *The Mind and Art of Victorian England*, ed. Josef L. Altholz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 58. While this was true for a large proportion of the middle classes, the same could not be said of the place of religion in the lives of the working classes. See G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London: Methuen and Co, 1965), ch.6. As far as religion and the working classes in Australia were concerned, Michael Hogan notes that by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, "the Australian colonies still sheltered a majority of inhabitants who were not churchgoers or who were actively antagonistic to church influence in society. This was clear at all levels of society, but especially among the working class.” Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1987), 78.

The crisis of faith that affected so many individuals in the nineteenth century had a powerful effect on the life and work of Catherine Spence, as did her adoption of the unusual and controversial religion of Unitarianism, an open-minded and tolerant denomination that Kathryn Gleadle calls "a religion for intellectuals."[2] She had been brought up in the Presbyterian church but its negative doctrine of original sin, its corollary of innate human depravity and the consequent futility of human beings' efforts to achieve salvation on their own caused her considerable grief; as she wrote in her autobiography, this "gloomy religion … made me doubt of my own salvation and despair of the salvation of any but a very small proportion of people in the world."[3] It is clear from *An Agnostic's Progress* (1884) that the period of doubt and self-examination she underwent in her thirties was a revelation to her. This religious allegory, which bears many similarities to John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, discusses in a positive way the usefulness of doubt in arriving at a faith that was of value in the nineteenth century, when so many obstacles seemed to lie in the path of those who would believe. Writing the book provided a means of explaining her belief in the existence of God "in Nature, in art, in literature and in history" and to satisfy herself that:

> reverent agnostics were by no means materialists; that man's nature might or might not be consciously immortal, but it was spiritual; that in the duties which lay before each of us towards ourselves and towards our fellow-creatures, there was scope for spiritual energy and spiritual emotion.[4]

It was also, as Susan Magarey argues, "a spiritual exploration that carried her far beyond the teachers of her youth, into an arena in which most men trod warily."[5]

More appealing to Spence than the doctrines of Presbyterianism were the views of the Unitarian church, a dissenting Protestant group which had rejected some aspects of

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[2] Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-51*, *Studies in Gender History* (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1995), 13.

[3] Spence, *Autobiography*, 11.

[4] Ibid., 63.

[5] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 86.

Christian belief, including the doctrines of original sin, atonement and the trinity.[6] Unitarianism was originally based on scriptural interpretations that differed from those of orthodox Anglicanism in its denial of the doctrine of the trinity, but came to reflect the contributions of influential philosophers and reformers such as John Locke, David Hartley and Joseph Priestley, the movement of German Romanticism, and the input of nineteenth-century English and American thinkers such as James Martineau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The result of this philosophical and theological mix was a "religion of reason," which was distinguished from other religions that relied on faith alone through its emphasis on reason as the basis of belief.[7]

Unitarianism's basic tenet was freedom, but it was a freedom that extended beyond religion; it included modes of thinking and acting that meant its adherents were active in movements for the abolition of slavery, for political reform after the English Civil War, for the emancipation of women and for female suffrage.[8] Spence's intellectual bent, her rationalism and her dislike of the self-sacrifice, denial and superstition that she felt characterised her earlier Presbyterianism make it unsurprising that Unitarianism was attractive to her. There were also other, more secular, activities and ideas to which British Unitarians subscribed that accorded with Spence's values and ambitions and which she actively promoted: the commitment to public duty that made them "a powerful pressure group, championing the liberal and progressive causes of the day," an emphasis on individualism, and a belief in the importance of education and the environment in shaping individuals (much like Robert Owen's views, as discussed in chapter three).[9]

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[6] See Introduction, Ruth Watts, "Rational Religion and Feminism: The Challenge of Unitarianism in the Nineteenth Century", in *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900*, ed. Sue Morgan (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

[7] Bridgwater and Kurtz, eds., *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. Regarding the history of the Unitarian church, see, for example, Henry Gow, *The Unitarians* (London: Methuen and Co., 1928); Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

[8] Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, 13. See also R.V. Holt, *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England* (London: 1938), ch.1.

[9] Gleadle, *The Early Feminists, 1831-51*, 11.

Many Unitarians regarded journalism as a significant force in the education of public opinion, just as Spence did, while a number of literary and philosophical societies in northern English cities were established by Unitarians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[10] In Adelaide Spence was president of the Girls' Literary Society for some years, "guiding and fostering," as her niece Lucy Morice observed, "a taste for literature among young students and teachers."[11] She was also encouraged in her literary activities by literary individuals such as Howard Clark, a Unitarian who was active on the committee of the South Australian Institute and was a nephew of the Hill brothers in England.[12]

Spence's involvement with the cultural formation of young minds, as well as her philanthropic activities in the fields of education and child welfare, continued the British Unitarian tradition of activism and reform, which was transplanted to Adelaide by philanthropists such as Emily Clark, Howard's sister, who was also a Unitarian. Spence's trip to England in the 1860s, during which she met a number of prominent philanthropists through the Hill family, including Frances Power Cobbe and Barbara Bodichon, inspired her to write a sonnet on her return trip, "rejoicing," as Susan Magarey observes, "in the friendships she had formed with 'that band of thoughtful men and women who would raise the level of life – the wise the brave and the true.'"[13] Intellectually as well as spiritually, these were Spence's kindred spirits.

The reforming zeal of the British Unitarians was not replicated to the same degree in Adelaide, however, according to Spence, who observed that Adelaide Unitarians were "interesting and clever," but that "in my long membership with this church I do not recall

[10] Ibid., 13-14; Holt, *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England*, 20.

[11] Morice, "Auntie Kate," ed.

[12] See Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 116, 24. The Hill brothers included Rowland Hill, the founder of penny postage in England, and Matthew Davenport Hill, member of parliament and Recorder of Birmingham. Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 75.

[13] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 90.

any effort outside of itself."[14] There was certainly not the same tradition of radical dissent in Australia as there had been in England, with the Unitarian Church not being established in Melbourne until 1852; the Adelaide church was founded in 1854, with the first service being held in October 1855.[15] The Adelaide followers were very respectable, considering the controversy that had surrounded Unitarianism in Britain where it was illegal until 1813.[16] Joseph Priestley, for example, had defended its supporters in 1785, saying, "We are, as it were, laying gunpowder, grain by grain, under the old building of error and superstition, which a single spark may hereafter inflame, so as to produce an instantaneous explosion."[17] By contrast, the Adelaide congregation was largely middle class and well-educated, and included "a number of prominent figures in Adelaide's business and educational worlds."[18] Numbers were low, and the group was "closely knit … [with] many of its members interrelated by marriage."[19] This caused some problems, described by the Reverend Colin Gibson in 1959:

> It is difficult indeed to maintain a freshness and enthusiasm, with no one else than ourselves to engender it, nearly 100 services a year, with the same voice in the pulpit, the same faces in the congregation. It may make for closeness, but the spark that strikes from other minds and sets alight our own, is absent.[20]

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[14] Spence, *Autobiography*, 28. C.H. Spence, Sermon - "The Christian Church," 7 December 1897, quoted in Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 79.

[15] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 75-6; Dorothy Scott, *The Halfway House to Infidelity: A History of the Melbourne Unitarian Church 1853-1973* (Melbourne: Unitarian Fellowship of Australia and the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church, 1980), 1.

[16] It was illegal before then to "impugn the doctrine of the Trinity." Unitarianism continued to experience problems in Britain, with the right to hold chapels disputed until 1844, when the Dissenters Chapel Act was passed.Scott, *The Halfway House to Infidelity*, 3.

[17] Joseph Priestley, *The Importance and Extent of Free Enquiry*, 1785, quoted in Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends Who Made the Future 1730-1810* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 409. Uglow notes that Priestley uttered these words first in a sermon preached on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, causing him to be nicknamed "Gunpowder Joe" (409). Priestley was a victim of the attacks on Dissenters in Birmingham in 1791, when his house, laboratory and chapel were burnt down. See Uglow, *The Lunar Men*, ch.37.

[18] David Hilliard, "Dissenters from Dissent: The Unitarians in South Australia," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 11 (1983): 99.

[19] Ibid.: 97.

[20] Quoted in Hilliard, "Dissenters from Dissent," 97.

However, in 1855, five years after Spence had told the Presbyterian minister Robert Haining that she would no longer take communion "as [she] was not a converted Christian," she took the opportunity to explore what was then a new and interesting Protestant faith in Adelaide.[21] She was undoubtedly influenced in her decision to hear what the Reverend John Crawford Woods, the first Unitarian minister in South Australia, had to say by meeting Unitarians such as Howard Clark and his sister Emily, who had brought British reforming traditions with them from Birmingham. The same traditions, however, did not take hold in Adelaide as R.B. Walker notes:

> Doctrinally heterodox the [Adelaide] Unitarians might be, but socially and politically they were conventional and respectable … [their] inactivity compared badly with the American Unitarian churches and Dr Strong's Australian church in Melbourne which were vital centres for philanthropic, educational, and community activities.[22]

Yet early colonial South Australia had something in common with the Enlightenment ideals implicit in the Unitarianism that Spence began to subscribe to in the 1850s. The pioneer settlers who came to South Australia from Britain as "apostles for progress and enlightenment" believed that religious liberty was an important element in creating a society that would allow them to better themselves.[23] They wanted no single church to dominate as the Anglican Church had done in England: "denominations were to be equal in the eyes of the state, with no favours shown and a fair field for all."[24] The voluntary principle was supposed to achieve this separation of church and state by ensuring that financial support for religions would be provided by each religious community, with no support to be provided by the state.[25] Such a situation, in which the state could not favour any church, would achieve "one of the main projects of the Enlightenment, the subjection

[21] Spence, *Autobiography*, 28.

[22] R.B. Walker, "Catherine Helen Spence, Unitarian Utopian," *Australian Literary Studies* 5 (1971): 33.

[23] Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, 145.

[24] Ibid., 249.

[25] See Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand*, ch.11, 15.

of the church to the state."[26] The state did have to step in with financial aid to churches at various times, given the failure of voluntaryism, but antipathy to religion being sponsored by the state remained widespread. Spence had initially supported the idea of state aid to religion because, like most people in the nineteenth century, she saw religious instruction and education as inseparable, but she came around to the view that religion was not an appropriate subject for schools to teach; rather than religion, morality should be taught

> not upon utilitarian principles, not because honesty is the best policy, but because goodness, truth, honesty, courage, patience, temperance and obedience to law are eternally and immutably right, noble, and beautiful and in conformity with the will of our Heavenly Father.[27]

For the Unitarian Spence, "morality and religion were inextricably woven together," but religion was a private matter – "a matter between a man's conscience and his God."[28]

Spence's work reflected other aspects of Enlightenment thought that came with her conversion to Unitarianism.[29] As mentioned earlier, Spence had come to the conclusion by the 1850s that the concept of original sin and belief in the innate depravity of human beings that flowed from it was "one of the most paralysing dogmas that human fear invented or

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[26] John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 171.

[27] C.H.S., Letter to *Register*, 30 December 1856, quoted in Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 107.

Regarding nineteenth-century views on the relationship between morality and religion, see Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch.4.

[28] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 133,25.

[29] Helen Thomson describes Spence as being "utterly steeped in Enlightenment ideas from her very childhood." Thomson, "Enlightenment Woman", 244. However, apart from Spence's autobiographical reference to the purchase of the third edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1797 by her grandfather, I am unable to find sufficient references to her childhood in the autobiography, her mother's reminiscences as recalled by Spence, or in Susan Magarey's biography of Spence, to reach this conclusion. Her A*utobiography* does refer to her parents' political tendencies: her mother "was instinctively a liberal, a whig, a reformer" and her father, although raised in a "radical household," was relatively conservative until his marriage to Helen Brodie, "when he was established a whig." Catherine Helen Spence, *Tenacious of the Past: The Recollections of Helen Brodie* (Adelaide: Centre for Research in the New Literatures in English (CRNLE) and the Libraries Board of South Australia, 1994), 58 & 59. These views probably played a part in influencing Spence, as perhaps did the rejection by her great-grandmother and Aunt Mary of some of the harsher aspects of Calvinism, but I believe that Unitarianism and its Enlightenment associations were more significant than childhood experiences in her later thinking.

priestcraft encountered,"[30] so the Unitarian belief that the chief guides to salvation were reason and knowledge was a blessed relief to her. Echoes of the Enlightenment were heard frequently in her appeals to reason and her support for the possibility of human progress, the latter idea being one that was frequently put into practice in nineteenth-century Britain through the philanthropic activities of Unitarians. She absorbed, too, the connections between utilitarians and Unitarians that, as Gleadle notes, "were, on the whole, widespread and productive." [31] These are reflected particularly in her restructured society in *A Week in the Future*. It was the writing of *An Agnostic's Progress*, however, that allowed her to articulate her ideas about orthodox Christianity, to spell out what she believed were its shortcomings, to explain why faith of some kind – not the faith that is certainty, "but a belief without sufficient proof" – "leads to right action and to self-sacrifice," and how, through doubt, one could arrive at the truth.[32]

The defects within Christianity that Spence discusses in *An Agnostic's Progress* highlight her commitment to rational thought and sympathy for fellow human beings, values shared by many Victorian intellectuals. She denigrates the superstitious and irrational basis of conventional religious belief, referred to as the "Religion of Fear," which "always laid down laws and taught Shibboleths which might delay the passage to the Beyond [that is, the afterlife], or, if that was impossible, might make the outward bound soul feel safe and hopeful."[33] The implications of this for the way human beings lived their lives was that people would sacrifice much now, not for the good of one's fellow human beings, but "as something paid down in order to secure a large reward hereafter" (10). She regarded virtue as that earlier feminist and agnostic Mary Wollstonecraft had - as a quality which "must be loved as in itself sublime and excellent, and not for the advantages it procures or the evil it

[30] Spence, *Autobiography*, 63.

[31] Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, 14.

[32] Spence, *Autobiography*, 63.

[33] Catherine Helen Spence, *An Agnostic's Progress from the Known to the Unknown* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1884), 5. All future references are to this edition.

averts, if any degree of excellence be expected."[34] There are echoes here, too, of the agnostic George Eliot who "opposed those who felt that the sole basis of morality is man's selfish desire for reward and fear of punishment."[35] Sacrifice performed as duty, unleavened by sympathy or compassion, is also rejected by Spence in her utopian novel, *Handfasted*, through the character of Marguerite, who describes the effects of such a harsh religion: "the dry husks of Calvinism … had … no savour or nourishment for my soul … The idea of human duty that ran through it was that we should hate ourselves to please God" (179).

This transformation of religion from a creed of love, as exemplified by the tolerance and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, into one of hatred is explored by Spence in *An Agnostic's Progress*. The "Religion of Hate" causes its worshippers to be intolerant of other faiths and to denigrate "the aims, lives and final doom of other worshippers" (12). A religion whose followers were unable to offer sympathy to others or to help relieve suffering because of the hatred and fear it engendered was not capable of helping to address what Spence saw as one of the great social problems of the nineteenth century – poverty. She also rejected a faith that worked to preserve the power and interests of the wealthier classes; this kind of faith – "a cheap sort of police for preserving order and for the protection of life and property" (32) – offered the poor only a superstitious fear of what would happen after death, rather than spiritual sustenance to help them through this life.

Spence's writing reveals that her struggle with orthodox Christianity had less to do with the conventional explanations for the crisis of faith that many underwent in the nineteenth century - the clash between scientific discoveries and the biblical explanation for human creation and the higher criticism which undermined the authority of the bible - than with the conflict between her humanitarian instincts and the harshness of the dogma laid down in Presbyterianism's Shorter Catechism and associated texts. She sees Calvinistic faiths as

[34] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 222. For a discussion of Mary Wollstonecraft and religion, see Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, *Cambridge Studies in Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch.3.

[35] Paris, "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity", 424.

religions of fear and hatred that force adherents and clerics to adopt a sense of duty based on negative emotions, superstition and myth, rather than seeking truth and trying to solve the problems that beset humanity. Unlike Presbyterianism, Unitarianism was a faith that supported Spence's humanitarianism, a set of values which had become more pervasive during the nineteenth century with the religious revival and which came into conflict with the "unsystematic and semiconscious quasi-Calvinism [that stressed] the sterner and harsher Christian doctrines: original sin, reprobation, vicarious atonement, eternal punishment."[36]

While the discoveries by Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin, and the doubts raised by German and British biblical criticism were not the chief causes of Spence's conversion, Unitarianism was able to provide a way of reconciling the questions they raised with a faith in God. Spence's immanentist view of a God who existed in the laws of nature and in the mind of man allowed science and religion to happily co-exist; in a sermon, Spence declared, "we feel thee in all around us within and without … wherever we live and move we see [thy] divine manifestation."[37] The guiding hand of God that she saw behind science was consistent with a faith that

> is not at the mercy of a disputed text, or a critical examination of the historical evidence as to the authenticity of a book. We can undismayed regard science as having put back indefinitely the date of creation of the world and of man … Our faith does not rely on ancient records but in the relations of the human soul to the Infinite God.[38]

Unitarianism sustained Spence's belief in the possibility that human beings could improve through their own devices and the benefits of science, that beacon of truth and knowledge, leading ultimately to a better society for all; as Lesley Ljungdahl argues, in "seeking some way of making consistent the conflicting orthodoxies of science and religion, Spence continually emphasises the need for more knowledge and for less dogmatism."[39] The rational and the religious were combined in Spence's new faith, described by Susan

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[36] Altholz, "The Warfare of Conscience with Theology", 64-5.

[37] See Paris, "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity", 11. Spence, Prayer - "The Supreme Teacher," [n.d.] SLSA archives, appendix IX, Ljungdahl, "From 'A Colonist of 1839'", 1:183.

[38] Excerpt from Spence's first sermon, Thomson, ed., *Catherine Helen Spence*, 573.

[39] Ljungdahl, "From 'A Colonist of 1839'", 1:70.

Magarey as offering her "a deity that was an omniscient creator of marvels that were slowly unfolding to the inquiring human intellect, a benevolent teacher whose lessons the rationalist scientific expansion of knowledge was beginning to reveal."[40] Spence translates this notion into practice in *A Week in the Future*, where contraception is able to prevent over-population, infantile diseases are wiped out, and machinery is capable of generating full employment with a six hour working day for all, while human beings have solved the social problems of poverty and crime.[41]

Spence's experience of religious doubt was similar to that of a number of British writers, many of whom she admired and whose work and ideas she wrote about. The results of widespread questioning of old assumptions could be seen in novels by George Eliot and Mrs Humphrey Ward, for example, in the poetry of Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Clough, and in the non-fiction prose of Thomas Carlyle, Bulwer Lytton and John Ruskin. James Froude, who observed that religion in nineteenth-century Australia had "become a matter of opinion, a thing about which nothing certain can be known," summed up the sense of disorientation and its impact on many mid-Victorians when he wrote in the 1880s:

> All around us, the intellectual lightships had broken from their moorings, and it was then a new and trying experience. The present generation which has grown up in an open spiritual ocean, which has got used to it and has learned to swim for itself, will never know what it was to find the lights all drifting, the compasses all awry, and nothing left to steer by except the stars.[42]

Some intellectuals such as George Eliot, who had a powerful influence on Spence (as discussed in chapters one and two), rejected any kind of organised religion, and therefore had to find another way of thinking about the basis of moral behaviour than was provided by the bible and religious dogma. Turning away from the powerful evangelicalism of her

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[40] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 78.

[41] This will be discussed in chapter 5.

[42] James Froude, *Oceana: The Tempestuous Voyage of J.A. Froude, 1884 and 1885* (1886), ed. Geoffrey Blainey, abridged ed. (North Ryde: Methuen Haynes, 1985), 98.

James Froude, *Thomas Carlyle. A History of his Life in London, 1834-1881*, vol. 1, 1884, quoted in Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870*, 66.

childhood and towards the German Higher Criticism to which she was introduced by her free-thinking, Unitarian friends in Coventry, Eliot came to regard the doctrines of her father's religion as "most dishonourable to God and most pernicious in [their] influence on individual and social happiness."[43] In her novels, she created a foundation for moral behaviour that appealed to a huge range of readers in the nineteenth century, a "religion of humanity" that "would give modern man [sic] a sense of purpose, dignity and ethical direction."[44] The moral philosophy she laid out made her a guiding light to people who wrote to her with their worries about "the dislocations of a social and moral world that was changing at the speed of light."[45]

Another intellectual British woman, Frances Power Cobbe, expressed views similar to Spence's about Calvinism, as well as undergoing an experience described by Spence as a "religious revolution … so much like my own that it rather shamed me to think I had remained blinded till I was thirty …."[46] Cobbe, a noted feminist and social reformer who achieved an international reputation for her work on theological and ethical issues, wrote that "it must merely cloud all the years of … life to have received the first impression of Time and Eternity through that dreadful discoloured glass whereby His sin is turned into darkness …."[47] Particularly influential on Spence was Cobbe's *An Essay on Intuitive Morals* (1855) in which she expounded a theory of morality that rested not on the divinity of Jesus and the authority of the bible, but on belief in God "as the source of an immutable eternal Moral Law."[48] This work, regarded by one reviewer as "the ablest treatise on morals in the English language" was praised by Spence, who delighted in Cobbe's repudiation of the doctrine of original sin and her assumption that, on the contrary, human beings

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[43] Letter from GE to Robert Evans, c. 1841, *The George Eliot Letters*, I, 128-30, quoted in Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 71.

[44] Paris, "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity", 13.

[45] Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 5.

[46] Catherine Spence, Sermon - "Frances Power Cobbe," 24 July 1904, ML MSS.

[47] Frances Power Cobbe, *Autobiography*, quoted in Spence, Sermon - "Frances Power Cobbe."

[48] Carol Bauer, "The Role of Religion in the Creation of a Philosophy of Feminism: The Case of Frances Power Cobbe," *Anima* 10, no. 1 (1983): 63. For more details about Cobbe's life, see Frances Power Cobbe, *Life of Frances Power Cobbe* (London: R. Bentley, 1894).

possessed virtues that could be cultivated.[49] Cobbe, like Spence, translated her belief in "the need for men and women to undertake those public responsibilities that were necessary to effect the social regeneration of mankind," into practice through writing and philanthropy.[50]

Also influential on the thinking of Catherine Spence was John Stuart Mill, who had never subscribed to any religion and who spent much of his life espousing the ideal of secular liberalism. To Mill, the basis of moral behaviour lay in a form of utilitarianism, in which an individual's fellow feelings would be advanced enough, perfect even, to "never think of, or desire, any beneficial condition for himself, in the benefits of which [other people] are not included."[51] He, like Eliot, was sympathetic to Auguste Comte's "religion of humanity," seeing a "majesty" in "the idea of the general interest of the human race, both as a source of emotion and as a motive to conduct."[52] While he tried to understand what it was about religion that attracted intelligent people, and to assess its moral value, he remained in a "state of theoretical skepticism."[53] Despite his own doubts, however, he was able to argue for the probability of "an Intelligent mind, whose power over the material was not absolute, whose love for his creatures was not his sole actuating inducement, but who nevertheless desired their good." In this essay, Mill argues that the usefulness of Christianity lay in Christ's function as the "ideal representative and guide of humanity" (a position very similar to that of many Unitarians, including Spence) which was "greatly in need of any wider range and greater height of aspiration for itself and its destination" than could be provided by mundane human life alone.[54] Thus Mill realised the need for something greater

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[49] "Intuitive Morals," *Christian Examiner*, 63 (1857), 384, quoted in Bauer, "The Role of Religion"; Catherine Spence, Sermon - "Frances Power Cobbe," 24 July 1904, ML MSS.

[50] Bauer, "The Role of Religion", 65.

[51] John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1861), ed. Mary Warnock (Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Company, 1979), 286.

[52] John Stuart Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, 1866, quoted in Collini, *Public Moralists*, 70. For a more detailed discussion of Mill's ideas about morality, see Collini, 67-74. Regarding Auguste Comte's religion of humanity, see, among others, T.R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity: The Impact of Comtean Positivism in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, 232-9.

[53] Karl Britton, *John Stuart Mill* (1953), ed., 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 213.

[54] Both this and the previous quotation are from John Stuart Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, 1874, quoted in Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1975), 152-3.

than the pragmatism of a philosophy like utilitarianism to affect the behaviour of human beings in a secular society. Like Spence in *An Agnostic's Progress from the Known to the Unknown* (1884), Mill criticised orthodox Christianity for its reliance on "selfish motives," such as a belief in the idea of personal immortality, to induce human beings to behave virtuously.[55] Interestingly, Mill's own crisis of faith had come, not through any religious doubt, but through the failure of his belief in utilitarianism and the loss of his "capacity for emotion."[56] Like Eliot, Cobbe and Spence, what had underpinned and sustained his early view of the world became meaningless, forcing him to find some other mode of understanding social relations and morality.

The crisis of faith such as that experienced by Spence mid-century, while well-documented in the case of significant intellectual figures in Victorian England, has not received the same attention with regard to Australian public figures. Possibly Spence was one of only a few to feel such doubts at the time. There were several women writers, however, whose experiences later in the century were not dissimilar to Spence's. Catherine Martin, for example, who, like Spence, was born in Scotland, turned away from her family's religion, and married into an Adelaide Unitarian family in 1882. In perhaps her best-known novel, *An Australian Girl* (1890), the heroine experiences doubts about Anglicanism, and becomes interested in the Roman Catholic Church. She abandons this too, and, as Margaret Allen writes, "reads Kant's critique of religious belief and engages in a correspondence with her clergyman brother, which leads him to accuse her of writing 'Satan letters.'"[57] Ada Cambridge, a poet and novelist, also questioned orthodox Christianity after the deaths of two of her children and being introduced to the Higher Criticism, but was in a more

[55] Collini, *Public Moralists*, 73.

[56] Gertrude Himmelfarb, Introduction to John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1854), ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (London: Penguin, 1985), 13. See also John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (1873), ed. Jack Stillinger (London: Penguin, 1989).

[57] Allen, "Catherine Martin: An Australian Girl", 159. Martin and Spence became close friends, with Spence expressing a high opinion of Martin's writing. See Spence, *Autobiography*, 55.

difficult position than Spence in being able to work through her uncertainties because she was married to an Anglican minister in Victoria.[58]

The timing of Spence's crisis of faith, which occurred in the 1850s, suggests that she was as much influenced by British events and individuals as by religious developments in Australia. According to Michael Hogan, in early to mid-nineteenth-century Australia most people professed allegiance to some denomination but there also existed a majority "who were not churchgoers or who were actively antagonistic to church influence in society," particularly among the working class.[59] As the nineteenth century drew on, economic, social (especially educational) and political changes began to alter many aspects of life in Australia, so that by the end of the century a nationalism that was strongly secular in nature became evident. These changes also affected religious life with "the dominant attitude to churches and clergymen [being one of] indifference," and many beginning to question the accepted belief that religion provided the basis of morality for society.[60] The scepticism that had developed earlier in the nineteenth century in Britain was becoming more widespread in Australia with George Higinbotham, a Victorian Supreme Court judge and the object of feminist Henrietta Dugdale's considerable admiration (see chapter three), observing that such scepticism was quite respectable:

> I take it to be an indisputable fact that at the end of the Nineteenth Century of the so-called Christian dispensation a very large number of the most cultivated, the most thoughtful, the most sober-minded and the most upright men in all the world, are really unable to determine whether good and sufficient reasons can be found for belief in the existence of God, and whether there is any basis for morality other than supposed personal interest or utility.[61]

At the time of Spence's period of doubt in the mid-nineteenth century, such questioning was limited - at least in public among the middle classes. Indeed there appears to have been a "religious revival" taking place in towns across Australia, according to Manning Clark,

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[58] Audrey Tate, *Ada Cambridge: Her Life and Work 1844-1926* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), 110.

[59] Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand*, 78.

[60] Ibid., 154.

[61] George Higinbotham, lecture, 1883, quoted in Hogan, 154.

with observers noting "a visible increase of religious consciousness and the growth of a sentiment of fidelity towards the church."[62] Not only did churches act as gathering places but they also served as markers of respectability in their communities, with people "seated strictly according to their rank in society," at least in Anglican churches, if not in all.[63] How deep the religious feeling associated with this church-going actually was is open to question, however, with contemporary commentators concerned that it was only superficial, with secular views and influences having a more powerful hold. The Reverend John McGarvie of the Established Scottish Church, for example, remarked in his diary that

> Times are widely different from the last Century. Then the church and pulpit were the vehicles of knowledge, now it is the daily Press. Men are less evangelic for Religion. They hear a Sermon, but read Six newspapers weekly, the Bible never. The voice of the people was echoed by the Minister, now the Editor is the organ of politics and liberty.[64]

George Nadel, too, observes the disinclination to religion more generally when he notes that "it seemed as if the colony [of NSW] was the beneficiary of the new mood of the nineteenth century, which triumphed over that of the eighteenth century: scepticism, like the exercise of political rights, was passing from the hands of the upper classes into those of the people at large."[65]

The question of what was to replace the moral values traditionally bestowed by religion was, for some, related to faith in education and the "brotherhood of man." George Nadel provides several examples of individuals who saw education as the new force for the inculcation of moral values. Henry Carmichael, who had been hired by J.D. Lang to teach at the Australian College, saw education as "the great moral panacea," while Edward Maitland contended that "one of the greatest discoveries of this century is that in order to really elevate a nation, it is necessary to improve the individuals who compose it." [66] This would

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[62] C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia: The Beginning of an Australian Civilization, 1824-1851*, 6 vols., vol. 3 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1973), 242.

[63] Ibid., 408.

[64] Diary of the Rev. John McGarvie, 1843-47, 4 January 1844, quoted in Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*, 242.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., 265-6.

be achieved "by lifting ignorance from the masses." John Woolley, the first professor of Classics at the University of Sydney, saw Mechanics' Institutes as the means of "propagating knowledge and of providing opportunities for the growth of social affections" since popular education and moral sympathy between all citizens lay at the heart of his form of secular religion.[67]

Manning Clark also sees the idea of the brotherhood of man as replacing "man's divinely conferred dignity" and "his special place in the scale of creation" that was the result of humanity's "long march away from the Judaico-Christian view of the world."[68] He argues that among itinerant workers during the middle of the century "a new vision of the world was replacing the worn-out faiths of Europe," a vision in which men "were bound by ties of affection and fellowship to each other," presaging that wave of nationalism and the masculinism that Marilyn Lake has argued was a feature of 1890s Australia.[69] Such irreligion caused frustration for an Anglican clergyman on the Monaro who wrote of "the carelessness and ungodliness of the labouring classes in the bush," and who suggested that more clergymen were needed so that these workers could recover from being "so lax and dead to the spiritual concerns of themselves and others."[70]

It seems, then, as if there were considerable differences between the spiritual beliefs and practices of the urban middle class and those of rural workers, as well as the working class more generally. Later in the nineteenth century, of course, scepticism about many established world-views became a dominant mode of thinking in both Britain and Australia, with nationalism, socialism, Fabianism, and a variety of spiritual forms accepted as alternatives. In Australia particularly, a high level of antireligion reigned among both

[67]Ibid., 268. For information on Woolley, see H.M. Green, *A History of Australian Literature*, 2 vols., vol. 1st (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1961), 272.

[68] Clark, *A History of Australia: The Beginning of an Australian Civilization, 1824-1851*, 354.

[69] Ibid., 276.

[70] Ibid.

intellectuals and the working class.[71] By then, religion was seen, as Patrick Morgan writes, as "almost un-Australian, something too dark, superstitious and backward looking to be needed in the bright, clean, open atmosphere of the Sunny South."[72]

The experience of Catherine Spence in moving from Presbyterianism to Unitarianism seems less representative of those changes to religion taking place in the Australian colonies and more in keeping with general British trends. It also reflects some of the peculiarities of South Australia. The two paradoxical trends described above that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century in Australia – one a movement towards the church, albeit superficial, and the other towards a nationalist secularism – were less evident in South Australia, where the mainstream British religions of Anglicanism, Presbyterianism and Roman Catholicism "were weaker … than in any other colony or state."[73] The reasons for this, according to David Hilliard and Arnold Hunt, were the atypical patterns of immigration to South Australia and the "effective response of Methodists and other evangelical Protestants to the South Australian social environment," resulting in increasing numbers of professed adherents to dissenting Protestant faiths between the 1860s and 1970s.[74] Church attendance also remained high, with a strong Christian influence on social and political reforms into the 1890s.[75] Overall, leaving an establishment church and morally repressive religion for a dissenting faith that promoted Enlightenment ideas about reason and progress put Spence in sympathy with the desires of those pioneers of South Australian settlement (discussed in chapter one), and also provided her with the friendship of an influential and well-educated if numerically small group, a supportive religious and intellectual environment, and a moral and spiritual basis for the issues and reforms she

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[71] Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996), 105.

[72] Patrick Morgan, "Australian Nationalism as a Religion Substitute", in *Between Two Worlds: "Loss of Faith" and Late Nineteenth Century Australian Literature*, ed. Axel Clark, John Fletcher, and Robin Marsden (Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1979), 58.

[73] David Hilliard and Arnold D. Hunt, "Religion", in *The Flinders History of South Australia. Social History*, ed. Eric Richards (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), 194.

[74] Ibid.

[75] See Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 151-53.

chose to promote during her long and active life.[76] It also connected Spence with those British thinkers who had applied their intellectual prowess to the matter of faith, just as she did, to arrive at a foundation for moral beliefs that could accommodate a changing world.

The moral basis of Spence's writing is not generally expressed in religious terms, understandable in a society that was founded on tolerance for both civil and religious liberty. She often writes of the moral or spiritual uplift that she believed would contribute to a better future Australia, exhorting individuals to raise their moral standards across a range of behaviours and, while some of these have been discussed in chapter one, the extent of her engagement needs to be stressed. The numbers of children, for example, who need to be cared for either by the state or through boarding out in foster homes could be reduced, according to Spence, by reducing the numbers of people who are "unfit guardians":

> when a community is cleared of tramps and wastrels; when all social forces are in favour of unbroken family life; when widows are encouraged and assisted to keep their families at home, earning all they can for them, the proportion of neglected and of uncontrollable children diminishes … [77]

She argued for the "honest unemployed" to receive relief before they reach "absolute destitution," that "strong measures should be adopted to punish men who, through laziness or drunkenness do not support their families," and that "loafers and tramps and inebriates should be sent to … labour farms …."[78] Obviously, the individualism that she championed elsewhere was an indulgence not to be permitted when families could be so badly affected, because the cost to society was far too great – it was a very particular type of individualism that she advocated and one that would have had an élitist appeal. Her condemnation of what she saw as irreponsible and immoral behaviour, as well as her belief in the power of heredity unaided by a positive environment, comes through clearly in *An Agnostic's Progress*, when Quaestor feels helpless in the home of a poor family where the drunken, brutal father has just died:

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[76] For further discussion of Unitarianism in nineteenth-century South Australia, see Ljungdahl, "From 'A Colonist of 1839'", ch.2; Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, ch.3.

[77] C.H. Spence, "A Study of Poverty," I, *Register*, 23 April 1906.

[78] C.H. Spence, "A Study of Poverty," II, *Register*, 24 April 1906.

> a vicious and brutal life had resulted in squalid misery, rags, and semi-starvation to the wife and little ones. On the woman's face and arms were the blue marks of blows inflicted on her in drunken fury; on the faces of the children was seen the hereditary taint of the blood of a sot and a profligate" (161).

To Quaestor, "the soul of the man appeared neither worth saving or damning; and the life of the dependant [sic] ones was likelier to be happier without him." Conventional religion was no help, demonstrated by the pointlessness of the actions of Gracious, a fellow pilgrim who believes in the power of faith and service, as she "aided the soul in its flight and spoke words of hope to the weeping wife and astonished children" (161).

Interestingly, another nineteenth-century Australian utopian, William Lane, depicted a similar scene in his ironically titled utopian blueprint, *The Workingman's Paradise* (1892), but with a very different explanation for its occurrence, the difference being rooted in the political and spiritual beliefs of the two writers. Whereas Spence places less blame on the society in which they live than on the individual who refuses to accept responsibility for his or her own behaviour, in Lane's hellish, depression-bound Sydney, working-class women are tired, weary souls, victims of men who have been brutalised and numbed by the capitalist system. The quest in Lane's novel is for a new socialist paradise, a place where men can redeem themselves from the "fallen" state to which competition and injustice have brought them. In some respects, Lane's socialism resembles a religion, and he refers to socialism as being "all that any religion has been to the highest thoughts of any people."[79] Michael Wilding, too, refers to Lane's philosophy as a "mystical, religious communism" and, in support of this, cites Lane's 1898 article on "Belief and Communism" in which he wrote of his

> absolute and unshakeable faith in what we commonly call "God". And when I say God I mean … the sense of the oneness, the livingness, the completeness, of that conceivable power which working through matter called us and all the wondrous

[79] Preface to Lane, *Workingman's Paradise*, ii.

For an analysis of the "religion of socialism" in late nineteenth century Britain, see Stephen Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896," *History Workshop Journal* 4, no. Autumn (1977).

> universe we see into being. That power I know and feel is supreme beyond all conceiving. Nothing is beyond its control.[80]

Both Lane and Spence aimed high in their remaking of society, but their approaches were that of the revolutionary versus that of the reformer, reflected also in the language they used. In the preface to *A Workingman's Paradise*, Lane writes:

> To understand Socialism is to endeavour to lead a better life, to regret the vileness of our present ways, to seek ill for none, to desire truth and purity and honesty, to despise this selfish civilisation and to comprehend what living might be.[81]

Whereas Lane uses phrases such as the "vileness of our present ways" and "this selfish civilisation", Spence argues that "all the best efforts, all the highest gifts, all the acquired skill of individuals [should be consecrated] to the service of the community …."[82] Spence did not espouse the radical socialism of Lane, but the claims that Lane makes for socialism here are not so distant from Spence's vision. Adopting a form of socialism in *A Week in the Future* that could co-exist with her religion, Spence takes what she feels are the ideas that best enable the achievement of her vision within the framework of a belief in God and in the best of Britain's legacy to the world. R.B. Walker argues that Spence's utopian vision had elements in common with the secular socialists such as Joseph Furphy and Bernard O'Dowd, as well as with Christian Socialists such as Charles Strong.[83] He concludes that Spence was closer to the Christians, for whom "the commonplace of the nineties, that socialism was the true Christianity, had a profounder meaning than it had on the lips of secularists."[84] Her socialism was not touched by nationalist or republican sentiments, for it was grounded in religious faith and intellectual considerations that reached beyond national boundaries.

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[80] Michael Wilding, Introduction to William Lane, *A Workingman's Paradise*, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1980), 10.

William Lane, "Belief and Communism," *Cosme Monthly*, September 1898, quoted in Wilding, Introduction to *The Workingman's Paradise*, 75.

[81] Preface to Lane, *The Workingman's Paradise*, ii.

[82] C.H. Spence, "The Democratic Ideal – III."

[83] Walker, "Catherine Helen Spence, Unitarian Utopian," 41.

[84] Ibid.

Although Spence targeted the working classes for improvement, her vision of a better Australia meant that she extended her criticism and moralising to the wealthy and the middle class. While she supported the aspirations of the lower classes to increase their level of material comfort and felt that wealthy people acted as a spur to greater efforts by those less well-off, she was scathing about the waste and ostentation that characterised morally destitute wealthy citizens. She decries, for instance, the sudden wealth that has accrued to squatters, merchants and speculators in Victoria leading to extremes of fashion and expense, and argues for a more productive use of industry:

> … while it may be called productive industry which provides sufficient clothing for health and comfort, it is surely unproductive industry which supplies the fashionable woman, at a cost of £200 to £1000 a year, with what her milliner and dressmaker pronounce sufficient for her."

Claiming that she is not so much objecting to costly clothes for the rich *per se*, she declares, rather, that she is "against the sheer waste from the caprice of fashion" while there are still "ragged children and shivering old people in the world."[85] Here she sees wealthy women in particular as bearing the responsibility for such economic waste, suggesting that the economic power they possess should be used to establish a moral authority.

The middle class was for Spence the great hope of Australian society, but unfortunately it "has not yet learned the real grandeur and importance of its position."[86] The means of the middle class discovering and asserting their potential power lies in their "fair education and moderate means," as well as in their work ethic: "the influence of one idle class upon another idle class tends to rivalry in extravagance but the influence of an intelligent working middle class on the classes above and below ought to be in favour of good morals and social freedom."[87] Spence's own middle-class status and attitudes are obvious in many aspects of the morality she promotes, from her assumptions about the "deserving" versus the "undeserving" poor, her proposal for labour farms for "loafers" and a sentence of the whip for men who beat their wives (assumed by Spence to be working class), to her general

[85] Both quotations from CHS, "Wealth and Waste – II. Fashion," *The Australasian*, 17 May 1879.

[86] C.H.S., "The Modern Spirit," *The Australasian*, 28 June 1879, 808.

[87] C.H.S., "Wealth and Waste – II."

condemnation of the "evil influences" of wealthy women who "are under the dominion of dressmakers and milliners, jewellers and upholsterers."[88]

Like many British Unitarians and Anglicans in the early nineteenth century, Spence's views reflect a "confident élitism against the upper and within the middle classes and [a] paternalism that assumed the working classes would follow their 'enlightened' lead."[89] No doubt Spence was influenced, too, by the Unitarians she met in England in the mid-1860s, people such as the Hill family "who had been publicly committed to the reforming cause since the 1790s and had been associated with radical organizations" in Birmingham for some time, and whose "religious and political beliefs meshed with their Utilitarian conceptions of the world."[90] In Adelaide, Spence's friendship with Emily Clark, the niece of Rowland and Matthew Davenport Hill, led to her involvement in a number of philanthropic activities including the South Australian Destitute Board and the Boarding-Out Society.[91] Of course, these attitudes were not confined to Unitarians for, as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall note, many members of the English middle class in the early part of the nineteenth century "sought to translate their increasing economic weight into a moral and cultural authority," but Unitarians were in the forefront.

For Spence, moral human behaviour, the kind that she advocated so forthrightly and unhesitatingly, stemmed from human beings themselves. Its end lay not so much in "fulfilling the word of God" but in "the welfare of humanity," reflecting a humanism that co-existed with her belief in a God "who is immanent in all creation visible and invisible, [who] is especially immanent in the human soul."[92] In some ways, Spence's combination of

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[88] C.H.S., "Wealth and Waste – II."

[89] Watts, "Rational Religion and Feminism", 107.

[90] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 237.

[91] For details of Spence's philanthropic activities, see Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, ch.4.

[92] Spence, Sermon - "Human Responsibility," [n.d.], SLSA Archives.

See entry on "humanism" Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Humanism in the nineteenth century became "associated with rationalism [in the sense] of an appeal to reason in contrast to revelation or religious authority as a means of finding out about the

humanism and religion resembles that of George Eliot in her pantheistic phase, as Bernard Paris refers to that period when Eliot endowed "all existence with a divine presence and purpose …"[93] Lesley Ljungdahl, too, notes the similarities between Spence's Unitarianism and Eliot's religious humanism, quoting U.C. Knoepflmacher's description of Eliot's "imaginative attempt to reconcile the evolutionary theory of Darwin with her religious beliefs"; she argues that Spence's novels also "try to make sense of an often amoral world."[94] Both women's rationalism caused them to rebel against the notion of a life beyond the grave and the moral sanctions that such immortality was supposed to produce, although Spence appears ambivalent on the issue at times. She observes in her 1876 article on Eliot, for example, that

> I cannot tell whether George Eliot has travelled from the idea of the perfectibility and immortality of the individual to those of the race; but the tone of some of her poems may be so interpreted. But no one can help forward the race without individually rising, and that passionate love of right which characterises her highest creations … , in which she herself seems to speak most clearly, is the very strongest argument that can be brought forward for the continued conscious existence of the souls so inspired.[95]

Her reference to a "continued conscious existence" of the soul suggests that she hoped for this kind of immortality but, in *An Agnostic's Progress*, the pilgrims Quaestor and Gracious argue about the existence of "the Beyond," with Gracious unable to give up her faith in the idea and therefore deciding to remain with the "Giant Pope." Quaestor, on the other hand, remains uncertain, wanting to continue "on my own path towards the Home of Truth," and regarding the Pope's realm as a place of "the oldest superstition and the deadliest" (113). In her reasons for writing *An Agnostic's Progress*, Spence also expresses her doubts about a

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natural world and the nature and destiny of man, and also as giving a grounding for morality …. Humanist ethics is … distinguished by placing the end of moral action in the welfare of humanity rather than in fulfilling the will of God."

[93] Paris, "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity", 11.

[94] Ljungdahl, "From 'A Colonist of 1839'", 1:71.

[95] Spence, "George Eliot," 160.

personal immortality, and R.B. Walker observes that "Miss Spence herself came to live comfortably with the belief that personal annihilation at death was likely."[96]

George Eliot continued searching for a religion that could provide "a more deeply-awing sense of responsibility to man, springing from sympathy with … the difficulty of the human lot," ultimately rejecting all religious forms such as the Anglicanism of her father and Comte's religion of humanity.[97] Spence, however, seemed largely satisfied with her choice of Unitarianism, although she moved away from some of the teachings of the Reverend Woods. Susan Magarey notes some of these divergences including Spence's belief that Jesus was not "an incarnate God, but a more or less godlike man," and her incorporation of political comment into her sermons. Woods, in fact, took exception to the contents of one of Spence's later sermons, regarding it as "more political than I like in a place of worship," and objecting also on the grounds that "I think her politics bad." [98]

Not afraid to be political in the broader sense, especially as she grew older, Spence combined her understanding of utilitarianism and socialism with her Unitarian beliefs to provide the moral and philosophical foundations for her utopian vision of a society in which an evolving conscience directs human beings to help others. It can be seen in her future utopia in *A Week in the Future*, a world "in which there is less prayer but more happiness, and less cruelty, oppression and greed," where "woman is no longer degraded as the slave or toy of man, but takes her place in all relations of life" and where "no child is crushed beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut car of commercial prosperity or ascendancy."[99] Not only are "the distinctions of caste obliterated," but "the slave is free, the serf is his own master, the laborer eats in peace and security the fruits of his toil"(133). Spence valued highly the concept of service and sympathy toward one's fellow human beings on the basis

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[96] Spence, *Autobiography*, 63; Walker, "Catherine Helen Spence, Unitarian Utopian," 35. See also "Replies to a religious questionnaire on C.H. Spence's religious beliefs, with biographical particulars," n.d., SLSA Archives and sermon by Spence - "Enoch walked with God," 24 November 1878, excerpt reprinted in Thomson, ed., *Catherine Helen Spence*, 571-5.

[97] Letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1872, quoted in Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 393.

[98] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 85-7.

[99] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 133.

of the Christian idea of actively seeking the good of one's neighbour. More than this, she argued, one should also seek "the collective good of all [which] can be done best by cooperation with others."[100] This cooperative spirit was capable, when applied to politics, of delivering the world "from the many evils that are eating into the heart and lessening the happiness of humanity," while she declared in the sermon with which the Reverend Woods was less than happy that "the Democratic ideal is the great Christian ideal."[101]

Despite the common threads in the work of Spence and Eliot noted in chapter two, and Spence's admiration of Eliot, Spence's optimism regarding the human race and her faith in the possibility of human progress contrasts strongly with Eliot's advice to those who wrote to her about their religious problems, to "resign yourself to suffering, wean yourself off the hope of a future life and nourish your fellow feeling towards the men and women you encounter every day."[102] Spence's utopia was inconceivable to Eliot because of the deterministic nature of her philosophy that insisted on maintaining the ties between present and past, the individual and the community, making change a slow and painful process. As Hughes concludes, "opting out into political, religious or feminist Utopias will not do" for Eliot, whose novels "show people how they can deal with the pain of being a Victorian by remaining one."[103]

Spence was not escaping from reality in her projection of the possibilities for the future; on the contrary, she sought to aid her readers in making sense of the world by suggesting the means by which they could achieve happiness and make the world a better place for all, like Eliot and the other intellectual guides she was influenced by. The way forward, for Spence, was through the evolution of the conscience. Learning was important in this process but not merely for the sake of intellectual satisfaction; as Spence demonstrates in *An Agnostic's Progress*, it needed to be put to work in the world of Vanity Fair. Thus Quaestor realises

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[100] Spence, Sermon - "Engines of Social Progress, 22 Sepember 1907, SLSA Archives.

[101] C.H. Spence, "Effective Voting: One Vote, One Value," *Advertiser*, 9 Feb 1893, 6; "Miss C.H. Spence at the Unitarian Church," *Quiz and the Lantern*, 9 May 1895, 8.

[102] Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 394.

[103] Ibid., 8.

when he reaches the Interpreter's House that it is not enough to acquire knowledge; for it to be of use, he must "teach and work in the world" (49). More than learning and teaching are required, however, with the quality of sympathy being an important element. Spence represents this through Gracious, a devotee of faith and service whom Quaestor meets on his journey, and who personifies altruism and duty. The various temptations of Quaestor and Gracious represent the extremes of egoism and altruism, and are ultimately rejected by both; the best way to live is not be found in either extreme, but in a reasonable combination of both.

Doubt could also make a positive contribution to the discovery of those truths that Spence felt were important to living a good life. Quaestor's doubt is a positive experience as Spence depicts it in *An Agnostic's Progress*, just as her conversion to Unitarianism was positive; for her, Unitarianism enabled "the cloud [to be] lifted from the universe" and made her "a most cheerful person" from that time on.[104] Spence's doubts arose from a refusal to accept standard authorities, characteristic of her attitudes on many matters. She recognised that time of questioning as a valuable rite of passage for those who lived in the nineteenth century but, at the same time, had some sympathy for those who wanted certainty. The young English clergyman Harry Stalker in her novel, *Gathered In* (1881-2), is wistful about such certainty when he and the hero, Kenneth, hear schoolchildren being catechised at the parish school: "These atoms have no doubts," he says to Kenneth, "any more than your grandfather and grandmother. Curious, is it not, that at the beginning and ending of life all seems so clear, and in the middle, when you want the faith to live by, it is so perplexing."[105] He sees his doubts as related to the age they live in and as a necessary part of the process of maturing, and, on the whole, they are a good thing: "modern difficulties are really something grand. It is worth living in this nineteenth century for the sake of the grand problems we face in their depth and height and vastness" (44). Another spiritually-inclined character in the same novel – the bush missionary, David Henderson – sees the nineteenth-century spirit of scepticism as a sound test for Christianity. He is less

[104] Spence, *Autobiography*, 28.

[105] Spence, *Gathered In*, 44.

dismayed by "the open batteries of the enemy who may be a truth-seeker than at the false defences and hollow zeal of those who consider themselves as the defenders of the faith … If the attacks would call out new life in the churches … the churches would be stronger" (138). Spence is here echoing a powerful sentiment of the Victorian era, expressed in Tennyson's "In Memoriam": "There lives more faith in honest doubt/Believe me, than in half the creeds."[106] The problem for orthodox religions is described by Josef Altholz nearly a century later in his discussion of the reasons for the "crisis of intellectual faith" in the nineteenth century, in which he charges "the spokesmen of orthodox faith" with

> narrowing the ground on which Christianity was to be defended and allow[ing] their scientific opponents to appear more honest than themselves. In these conflicts, the position of orthodox doctrine was, as presented by its upholders, not only less valid but less moral than that of irreligious science. As events unfolded, not merely the intellect but the moral sense, particularly the sense of truthfulness, revolted against orthodoxy.[107]

Spence saw this "moral sense" that was an integral part of the nineteenth century as a force for the progress of humanity. She wrote in a review of Justin McCarthy's *A History of Our Own Times* (1880) that

> no one can look back on the events of the last forty or fifty years without acknowledging that no such period of time ever before was so romantic or so progressive … Great as are the events, they are all the more interesting because there is generally a moral force at the back of them.[108]

Morality provided the impetus for much social reform that occurred in the nineteenth century, according to Spence; it was vital to countering the influence of Mammon on contemporary life in Vanity Fair, which was "the great mart where everything in the Within [that is, life on earth] that is desirable and desired can be bought, and where everything, even the most sacred, is eagerly and shamelessly offered for sale" (146). In Vanity Fair, Quaestor meets several would-be reformers such as Audax who has become disillusioned and quiescent, Sanitas who would compel all citizens to be clean, Temperans who "would

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[106] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "In Memoriam," section 96.

[107] Altholz, "The Warfare of Conscience with Theology", 60.

[108] [C.H. Spence], Review of A History of Our Own Times: From the Accession of Queen Victoria to the General Election of 1880 by Justin McCarthy, *Register*, 24 November 1880.

level Beer Street and Gin Lane to the ground," and Chartus who believes in the power of politics to achieve social and moral reform, but none of them is effective against a morality that worships material success. Spence offers no easy solutions to the problems of Vanity Fair and suggests that "battering at the Gate of Revolution" will not change the world; the way is, rather, to be found by pushing patiently at the "Gate of Reform" (255). Progress is to be achieved by acting for the benefit of human beings in the hope of improvement in the here-and-now, rather than in the faint hope of a life hereafter; as Quaestor says,

> I want to make the most and the best of this life Within for all of us – only the life that I can see, the only life that I am sure that I can work in. If there is another world Beyond, we shall be none the worse for the efforts we have made for the amelioration of this (189-90).

Class was a prime consideration in Spence's morality. In her philanthropic work she tried to raise up the working class, and she does the same in *Gathered In* through the evangelical David Henderson. The great god, materialism, is all-powerful in the remote Australian sheep stations, where the questioning Kenneth Oswald is sent to work for his uncle. David Henderson explains to Kenneth that part of his motivation to work as a bush missionary lies in his grief at seeing "the station hands and the shearers, the men by whose weary drudgery wealth and comfort are produced for their masters and prosperity for the colony, making their money like machines, and spending it like idiots or madmen" (81). Unlike Manning Clark who attributed the bush workers' lack of religious feeling to a new vision of the world, Spence regards their lack of spirituality as the result of the worship of materialism and the lack of something greater than themselves to believe in. In *Gathered In*, the character of Henderson, the unordained evangelist, tries to show them a way to fill this gap. But he reaches out to the working and middle class alike in his informal prayer session at Wilta station:

> he touched each soul with an intense motion, awoke in each a desire, more or less evanescent, after a union with the Divine, rose from transitory to eternal, from the duties of every day to the longings for higher powers and worthier service in the long day that was to follow, from the tenderness of our human loves and human memories to the infinite tenderness of the Divine compassion" (93).

Despite the apparent egalitarianism, there is a distinction between the way the workers and the employers respond to Henderson's preaching. The liberal and sympathetic employer, Mr Gray, asks him if there is anything that can be done to improve the men's situation, and invites Henderson to spend the night in the house, rather than the men's dormitory, while the workers dwell on the content, going to bed at once and foregoing their usual game of cards (99).

Spence had a different message for the middle and wealthier classes, encouraging them to accept greater responsibility for their actions and to be less materialistic. She tried to inculcate more thoughtfulness and consideration into their way of life and how they treated those less well-off, as discussed in chapter one. She also highlighted the materialism that led some wealthy and middle-class citizens to find solace in the rituals of high Anglicanism. Observing the superficial nature of this attraction as represented in Eliza Lynn Linton's *Under Which Lord* (1879), she noted that "it gratifies their taste for beauty in form and design, in harmonious colouring and thrilling music."[109] To transform this love of ritual into something more spiritually satisfying required the efforts of more thoughtful individuals who should "try to explain it, and according to their own convictions, endeavour to direct it, or divert it into better channels."[110] As far as the working classes were concerned, she wanted them to be raised up through their own efforts and by the efforts of those who were better-educated and better off financially.

But what of the influence of her faith on her views about women? Spence's acceptance of Unitarianism occurred around 1856, two years after the publication of *Clara Morison*, so it appears that her sympathy for and interest in analyzing women's situation pre-dated her religious conversion. Her later novels, however, reveal a broader support and a more overt commitment to the rights of women, as well as occasional equivocation about women's place, suggesting that both radical and conservative Unitarian views about women had an

[109] Catherine Helen Spence, "The Place of Religion in Fictitious Literature," *Victorian Review* 2, no. ix (1880): 368.

[110] Ibid.: 370.

effect on her thinking. In this she was representative of many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century feminists who were influenced by Unitarianism, but were not necessarily Unitarians themselves. Such a list would include Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Barbauld, Barbara Bodichon, Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, Mary Carpenter, Elizabeth Gaskell, Bessie Rayner Parkes, Anna Jameson, Octavia Hill, Francis Power Cobbe and Mary Somerville who raised the issue of how women were treated and regarded; their opinions about women's rights varied considerably, however.[111] All of these women benefited from the wide-ranging discussions that characterised Unitarian circles in nineteenth-century Britain, as well as from the emphasis on education and the rational moral nature of Unitarianism. At the same time that such women fought for improvements to women's position in society in relation to employment, education and legal rights, they were also circumscribed, as Ruth Watts argues, by "both economic and social considerations and their own deferral to more conservative gender conditions of their time."[112] This was reflected in the fact that women such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Harriet Martineau and Florence Nightingale were equivocal in their support of feminism, or at least less radical than, say Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkes. Unitarianism itself was not monolithic, with feminism not necessarily a natural corollary of Unitarian liberalism, as Kathryn Gleadle argues.[113] The nexus between feminism and Unitarianism arose, according to Gleadle, from the attitudes of the more radical Unitarians in early nineteenth-century Britain; it is possible that Spence and other Unitarian women such as Emily Clark, in seeking to expand the role of women from the private to the public spheres, helped to introduce something of this radical flavour to Adelaide life in a form that was acceptable to the middle class.

The central points in the radical Unitarian vision that related to women – that women's emancipation was a part of the wider vision for the improvement of society, "whereby society might be ruled by reason and not by force," and the Christian notion of concern for

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[111] See Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860* (London: Longman, 1998), ch.4&10.

[112] Watts, "Rational Religion and Feminism," 39.

[113] Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, 31. Gleadle's book contains an excellent analysis and discussion of the relationship between Unitarianism and feminism.

one's neighbour[114] – were also central to Spence's Unitarianism. They can be observed in her utopian novels, her romance-realist novels, in her journalism and in her sermons, although not always expressed explicitly or in radical terms. She did not use these media in the same manner as some of her evangelical predecessors and contemporaries such as Hannah More and Elizabeth Gaskell did, seeking to "make their feminized social gospel prevail [and] calling on male readers to repent."[115] Instead, she used rational argument to present her case for a broader range of employment to be available to women, particularly in her early novels. In *Mr Hogarth's Will*, for example, Jane Melville's appeal for equitable treatment by employers is based on logic, while, in *Clara Morison*, Spence seeks to undermine the ideology that respectable middle-class women should be idle by appealing to the practicalities of life in colonial Australia for single women.[116]

Spence's sermons were based on a humanism that was ideally addressed to all people, irrespective of gender, as can be seen from the examples quoted so far and from the titles of sermons listed in the bibliography. Rather than "interpret[ing] scripture as offering divinely sanctioned challenges to masculine authority," as Christine Krueger argues eighteenth century women preachers and "the Victorian novelists who were their heirs" did, Spence advocated cooperation, sympathy and service by all human beings towards each other.[117] Given that Elizabeth Gaskell and Spence were both Unitarians, it would seem, therefore, that Unitarianism could produce quite different effects on the kinds of feminism that nineteenth-century women writers practised and preached. Differences between them might also be related to the fact that the impact of Unitarianism on feminism in Australia was undoubtedly less than in Britain. Sue Morgan argues that "the radical and progressive outlook [of Quakers and Unitarians] on social and political issues provided an important intellectual impetus and leadership for British feminism," but conditions in Australia were

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[114] Ibid., 49.

[115] Christine L. Krueger, *The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6.

[116] See ch. 2 of this thesis.

[117] Krueger, *The Reader's Repentance*, 8.

very different.[118] Factors that possibly contributed to a substantially weaker influence were the low number of Unitarians in Australia and the wide geographical dispersal of population.[119] Also, as discussed in chapter two, the women's rights movement in Australia did not really emerge until the 1880s and 1890s, although there were individual advocates for particular issues before then.

Women's education was one area where Spence had much in common with British Unitarians. From the late eighteenth century, Unitarians led the way in the promotion of education as the means of achieving changes that they believed would benefit society, with much of their philosophy about education influenced by Joseph Priestley. Priestley believed in equal education for both sexes, arguing that women should receive "the highest [education] of which they were capable … the learned and the modern languages … mathematics and philosophy. Certainly the minds of women are capable of the same improvement and the same furniture as those of men."[120] Spence appropriates this principle of equal education for women in *Mr Hogarth's Will*, with a radical uncle educating his nieces in such a manner. In his will, bequeathing all of his wealth to a supposedly illegitimate son, he articulates his views:

> As I have come to the conclusion that the minds of men and women are radically the same, and as I believe that if the latter are trained in the same way as the former they will be equally capable of making their own way in the world, I have acted upon this principle in the education of my two beloved nieces … (4)

But Spence underlines the impractical nature of this theory by showing the difficulties faced by Jane and Alice Melville in obtaining work in a society where patriarchal ideology holds sway. This is not to argue that only Unitarianism influenced Spence's views on women's education for she was also familiar with the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, Robert Owen

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[118] Sue Morgan, "Women, Religion and Feminism: Past, Present and Future Perspectives", in *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900*, ed. Sue Morgan, 3.

[119] Unitarians composed .27% of the population in South Australia and .11% in Victoria and New South Wales, as recorded in the census of 1881. Hilliard, "Dissenters from Dissent: The Unitarians in South Australia," 92.

[120] Joseph Priestley, "Reflections on death" (1790), quoted in Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England*, 36. For a more detailed discussion of Priestley's ideas about education, see Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England*, 33-40.

and Charles Fourier, as discussed in chapter three, but Priestley's words do reflect a theme that was central to the ideas of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century utopians and reformers.

In her journalism, Spence also advocated improved education for women but, like Catherine Barmby, a Unitarian Owenite feminist who was radical in many respects, she also adhered to the doctrine of separate spheres, although giving it a less religious context. Barmby, according to Watts, "grandly described the domestic sphere as including customs, private and public behaviour and assigned to women's rule by God and thus requiring a greater educational basis" for women.[121] Spence, similarly, called for women to be educated with "a more rational curriculum of studies," highlighting the "influence which women exert and the part they play in moulding the minds of succeeding generations. We hold it to be seemly and right that the sexes in actual life keep to their own separate spheres …." [122] Likewise Harriet Martineau, who was a Unitarian in her youth, argued that "male and female achievements were equal for as long as they were educated the same," but she felt that the "appropriate duties and peculiar employments of women [could] be done better by those with active minds and 'noble' interests: … no-one with an 'uncultivated' mind could be a true friend to her husband or suitable teacher of children."[123] The sentiments of these three women demonstrate the ideological constraints on women using their education outside the domestic sphere, despite all of them being writers and performers in the public realm and desiring change to the *status quo*.

The ideology of separate spheres was no less influential in religious life than in the rest of middle-class life in mid-nineteenth-century Britain and Australia, with Unitarians not being immune despite their relatively liberal position on many issues. Marriage and Ruskinian views about women's education sometimes overrode the more liberal aspects of Unitarian ideas about women. Sarah Austin, for example, an English Unitarian woman, was expected to read the work that her future husband, also a Unitarian, was engaged in studying,

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[121] Ibid., 195. For discussion of Catherine Barmby, see Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 172-82.

[122] [C.H. Spence], "The Education of Females," *Observer*, 17 January 1874, 13.

[123] Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England*, 154.

including Adam Smith, Francis Bacon and John Locke and to study Latin, because he desired "to talk with [her] on all subjects which require my attention."[124]

At the same time, religion had an influential role to play in propagating the ideology of separate spheres, with even a radical like Catherine Barmby supporting the godly nature of the assignment of separate spheres. A Birmingham Congregational minister, John Angell James, expressed much of the mid-century feeling about women and their place in the religious context in a sermon in 1852:

> Neither reason nor Christianity invites women to the professor's chair, nor conducts her to the bar, nor makes her welcome to the pulpit, nor admits her to the place of ordinary magistracy. Both exclude her - not indeed by positive and specific commands, but by general principles and spirit, from the corruption of the camp, the debates of the senate, and the pleading of the forum. And they bid her beware how she overleaps the delicacy of her sex, and listens to the doctrines of effeminate debaters, or becomes the dupe of modern reformers or fashionable journalists. They forbid us to hear her gentle voice in the popular assembly; and do not even suffer her to speak in the Church of God. They claim not for her the right of suffrage, nor any immunity by which she may 'usurp authority over the man.' And yet the bible gives her her throne, for she is the queen of the domestic circle. It is the female supremacy in that interesting domain, where love, and tenderness, and refinement, thought and feeling preside.[125]

James's use of reason and religion to support the argument for women remaining within the domestic sphere was directly opposed to those radical Unitarian ideas about women that became part of the impetus for the women's rights movement in England. Perceiving the outside world as a corrupting place for women, he impresses on his audience the need for women to retain their feminine delicacy by not stepping into parliament or the pulpit. He calls on biblical support for the argument that women's place is in the home, using the same rhetoric that John Ruskin does a few years later when he declares that women possess the power of queens but their thrones exist only within that "sacred place, [that] vestal temple, [that] temple of the heart watched over by Household Gods …" – the home.[126] By

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[124] Sarah Austin, letter, 27 June 1860, quoted in Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, 25.

[125] John Angell James, *Female Piety* (1852), quoted in Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1996), 161. For further discussion about John Angell James, see Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 126-30.

[126] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, 108.

conceding women sovereignty within the restricted domestic world, a concession that does not guarantee any power at all to women in reality, both men claim that women's moral superiority actually places them in a position higher than men; as Kate Millett argues, "by transposing political position to moral rectitude, we are given to imagine that women are 'better' than men."[127] But the moral superiority argument used to restrict women to the domestic sphere was a double-edged sword, for it also gave women an authority that allowed them to act in the public sphere, an opportunity taken up by many women in the nineteenth century.

Thus considerable tension existed for many Unitarian women between their desire to fulfil their maternal and domestic duties in a manner consistent with "that Unitarian thinking which wanted all people to respond to family and community values," and the belief shared by many Unitarians that "women should have moral responsibility for themselves, should speak out when necessary …, share in the creation of values and do their own appointed work."[128] Much of Spence's writing reveals this tension, with some of the apparent inconsistencies about her fictional women discussed in chapters two and three. On the whole, however, her attitudes to women, work and education and to the importance and power of reason, tolerance and sympathy as revealed in her novels, suggest a strong radical Unitarian influence. The observations that Ruth Watts makes of Elizabeth Gaskell, that "it was within the Unitarian context that [she] held up an ideal of independently minded, deeply educated women who needed to grow sexually as well as mentally," and that "her heroines were capable of courage and making their own decisions (sometimes more so than her male characters)" could equally be applied to Spence.[129]

Spence's journalism reflects this tension in a less explicit fashion. There is no Margaret Elliot or Jane Melville in her journalistic writing, as she generally uses the voice of the supposedly objective "we" even when she raises matters relating to women's welfare and

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[127] Millett, "The Debate over Women: Ruskin vs. Mill", 135.

[128] Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England*, 200-1.

[129] Ibid., 210. For further discussion of Elizabeth Gaskell and Unitarianism, see Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England*, 207-11.

rights such as domestic abuse and education for girls. In an article entitled "The Recent Murder Case," for example, she comments on the discharge of a man charged with assaulting his wife after the wife refused to testify against him. Spence commends the woman for her forgiveness - "if this forbearance … proceeded from affection on the part of Elizabeth Ann Buck, it is wonderful and it is beautiful" – suggesting that love and the desire to keep her family together are sufficiently good reasons to act in this way.[130] In another article that encouraged women to avoid raising spoiled children by combining the demands of motherhood with outside interests, she commends a commitment to family values as well as female independence:

> There is a time in a woman's life when her children ought to be the main object of her life and to fill up almost all of her time; but if possible she should let her children see that she has interests and duties outside … This is the sort of love which is the holiest thing alive, for it is the most thoroughly unselfish, and the very strength and ardour of maternal love demands the check of reason and justice to make it burn more purely and healthfully.[131]

Spence did not follow her own advice to women, however. Although she cared for a number of orphaned children within her own home and extended her mothering to the wider community in her philanthropic work, they were never "the main object of her life." She certainly never confined herself to the domestic sphere, and Unitarianism, on the whole, provided a supportive foundation for her public role. Being single and ambitious, as well as living in Australia, meant that she had more freedom than most women, even Unitarians, in England. With a sound and relatively rounded education, a belief in the equal competence of men and women given equal education and opportunity, and a growing commitment to improving the lot of humanity, Spence was able to speak out and act publicly without suffering any stigma to her reputation. She was setting an important precedent in Australia, demonstrated by the vote of thanks given to Spence after a lecture to the South Australian Institute on Robert Browning in 1871. After noting "the strain which must be occasioned to a lady by keeping an audience interested for so long a time," the Dean (Canon Farr) commented on the "debt due by the community to any one showing that a woman might

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[130] [C.H. Spence], "The Recent Murder Case," *Register*, 24 June 1878, 4.

[131] [C.H. Spence], "Mothers," *Register*, 5 July 1878, 5.

take her place in instructing her fellows."[132] She, too, was aware of the significance of what she was doing: one of her motives in "taking this new and somewhat bold step" in delivering such lectures was that "the initiative once taken, it might be easier thenceforward for any woman who felt that she had anything to say to come forward simply and quietly to say it."[133] Spence was following the example of a number of English women and ensuring that public speaking by a woman did not result in damaged respectability, acknowledged by Canon Farr: "When ladies like the Marchioness of Londonderry and Lady Herbert addressed much larger audiences than this, there could be nothing unwomanly in so doing …."[134] On the contrary, Spence was well-respected, with the *Advertiser* in 1893 commenting that her "arguments [on women's suffrage] are thoughtful and sober and her language entirely free from the screeching hysteria that has so often brought ridicule and contempt on the cause of women's rights."[135] Spence herself was proud of her respectable yet public status, saying that "no-one has gone out of the 'woman's sphere' more than I have during the last twelve years … and yet I believe I am as womanly as ever."[136]

If the separate spheres ideology caused difficulties for other Unitarian women in both Britain and Australia in reconciling the two aspects of women's role, such problems were exacerbated by the kind of education that Unitarian women received, as well as their rational outlook on the world. When we consider also the observation by the Unitarian, William Fox, that "a man's character was perceived, especially by Unitarians, to be only fully developed when he acted in public, for the public good was the 'noblest object,'" then

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[132] "Institute Lectures," *Register*, 11 November 1871. Spence was invited to give a lecture to the South Australian Institute in 1866, but she declined on the grounds that she was "scarcely strong-minded enough for that." Quoted in Carl Bridge,"Catherine Helen Spence and the South Australian Institute: A Note," *South Australiana* 22, no. 1 (1983): 75. The lecture was delivered by John Howard Clark but her poor handwriting made it difficult for Clark to read. She later wrote that "it was not very satisfactory [and] I mentally resolved that if I was again asked I should offer to read my own MS" (*Autobiography*, 45). Bridge notes that very few women borrowed books from the Institute at that time; "the practice was that husbands, fathers and brothers would borrow books for the women of their families to read … In middle-class circles … it was apparently unseemly for ladies to frequent libraries" (75).

[133] "South Australian Institute Lecture," *Register*, 4 November 1871.

[134] "Institute Lectures," *Register*, 11 November 1871.

[135] "At a recent meeting of the State children's council," *Advertiser*, 17 March 1893, 4.

[136] Ibid.

it is not surprising that Unitarian women often behaved in ways that blurred the boundaries between the public and the private.[137] One path they could take into public life without compromising their respectability was philanthropy, undertaken by a number of religious women in nineteenth-century Britain and Australia.[138] It was a path that enabled women, as Shurlee Swain notes, "to construct a public role for women which complemented rather than threatened existing notions of gender," in which religion functioned "as both an enabling and a constraining factor in defining women's place."[139] Many of the causes and activities that Spence took on were regarded as womanly activities in keeping with women's traditional caring and maternal role, such as the Boarding-Out Society and the Destitute Board, but others were less "feminine." Her campaign for proportional representation, for example, with its heavily political flavour was well outside the usual realm of women's activities. Spence's preaching, likewise, was unusual compared with most of the religious activities performed by women in nineteenth-century Australia, as will be discussed in more detail below.

The connection between religion and philanthropy in women's lives that Spence perceived was similar to the belief held by Frances Power Cobbe, "that true religion demanded service," but that service by itself did not constitute the whole of one's faith. In *An Agnostic's Progress*, the character Gracious sees her path to the discovery of faith through service to others, with Quaestor, in his search for the truth, seeing her as "the true complement to his nature." The marriage of a truthful, rational faith with a life of service is the ideal, for it combines both womanly and manly virtues, neither of which is totally effective on its own in raising up humanity in Spence's view. But philanthropy was not the only way in which women could serve.

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[137] W.J. Fox, Sermon, 1 March 1829, quoted in Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England*, 202.

[138] See F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Shurlee Swain, "Religion, Philanthropy and Social Reform: Meanings, Motivations and Interactions in the Lives of Nineteenth Century Australian Women," *Women - Church* 23 (1998).

[139] Swain, "Religion, Philanthropy and Social Reform," 30.

Spence was able to envision a society in which women could be religious and useful citizens without being engaged in charity and philanthropy. The utopian society of *A Week in the Future* has eliminated the poverty that necessitated the charitable works of nineteenth-century women, but it is a woman who explains the religion of twentieth century London to Emily Bethel, and who represents the spiritual leaders of that time. Miss Somerville (also referred to as "St Bridget"), a single woman who is both a milliner and a minister, is "that exceptional person - an old maid" who "seems to belong to all of us in the [Cooperative] Home" and whose vocation "is for single life and general motherhood " (100). With no charitable work to do, St Bridget is still much revered because of her preaching and her prayers, as well as the teaching through which she "endeavours to add to the excellent secular influences which go to form character, a spiritual motive, and a lofty ideal" (101). Spence stretches the conventions of women as teachers and nurturers "to give single women positive value and to dignify their work," as some mid-century English feminists did,[140] and breaks with convention altogether to permit St Bridget to conduct services in Westminster Abbey. The content of the sermon observed by Emily is controversial too, with St Bridget describing the inequalities of the old world that had caused so many problems and presenting Christ "less as the mediator between God and man than as the mediator between the rich and the strong in this world, and their poorer and weaker brethren" (132). The sermon sounds not unlike Spence's own sermon in 1893 so disapproved of by John Woods (see page 25). Not only does St Bridget appropriate the authority reserved for men in the nineteenth century by actually conducting a marriage service, but the service itself omits the vow of obedience and there is no giving away of the bride; instead, "the young people gave themselves to each other" (89-91).[141] This singular representation of a woman religious undermines the patriarchal hierarchy of orthodox churches and the marginalisation of women within them, as well as the idea of the old maid as a "superfluous" woman, unwanted by any man and having no meaning in her life.

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[140] Eileen Janes Yeo, "Protestant Feminists and Catholic Saints in Victorian Britain", in *Radical Femininity: Women's Self-Representation in the Public Sphere*, ed. Eileen Janes Yeo (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 131.

[141] Spence's mother also did not vow to obey her husband, as Spence describes in *Tenacious of the Past*. It was apparently not obligatory in Scotland, and the officiating clergyman "knew his parishioner would make a good wife and was not quite so sure of the strange lad from Melrose" (22).

This was indeed a radical representation of women in an environment where they generally had a limited role, an environment in which, as Sabine Willis notes, "the limitations and opportunities provided by a patriarchal Church reflected those of the wider society."[142] The Unitarian church, as noted earlier, possessed some differences from that "wider society," however, and the women who subscribed to it were able to take advantage of some of those differences. This "most liberal of the Christian denominations" provided an opportunity for involvement in the public sphere that was not offered by other denominations.[143] Preaching by women had a complex history in Britain but, by the 1850s, "changes to institutional religion and in the wider society," meant that the number of female preachers, which had risen in the first half of the century, began to decline.[144] The increased emphasis on separate spheres in the nineteenth century tended to marginalise women's role in most churches.[145] Even in that earlier period when female preachers were more common, they were regarded, according to Deborah Valenze, as "breaking the rules … of an institution historically controlled by men…."[146] Unitarianism, however, placed another kind of authority above that of scripture; as Hugh McLeod observes, "as heirs to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, they insisted that the [Bible] must be interpreted in the light of human reason."[147] Thus, the appointment of Martha Turner in 1873 as pastor of the Unitarian church in Melbourne was the result of Unitarian reason, but it was nevertheless unusual, a point recognised by Florence and Rosamund Hill, daughters of Unitarian reformer Matthew Davenport Hill: "Melbourne is, we believe, unique as part of the British Empire in the possession of a formally appointed female pastor to one of her congregations."[148] Both

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[142] Sabine Willis, Introduction to *Women, Faith and Fetes: Essays in the History of Women and the Church in Australia,* ed. Sabine Willis, (Melbourne: Dove Communications and the Australian Council of Churches (NSW) Commission on the Status of Women, 1977), 12.

[143] McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914*, 163.

[144] D.M. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 11.

[145] See Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* ch.2.

[146] Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 11.

[147] McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914*, 163.

[148] F. and R. Hill, *What We Saw in Australia*, 1875, quoted in Scott, *The Halfway House to Infidelity*, 51. For more on Martha Turner, see Scott, *The Halfway House to Infidelity*, 53-8.

Turner's appointment and Spence's preaching role were important in the history of Australian women and religion, especially when one considers that the British Unitarians took until 1904 to appoint a woman, Gertrud von Petzold, as a minister.

Despite such apparently advanced thinking, however, Unitarianism had something in common with other churches in mid-nineteenth-century Australia. Dorothy Scott demonstrates that women's roles in this church were still limited by citing the following motion from the minutes of the Melbourne Unitarian Church Committee in 1854:

> that the ladies of the Church willing to assist in making preparations for a tea-party … be requested to remain after the morning service. That the husbands of such ladies … be appointed to a sub-committee to manage the business relative to the tea-party.[149]

By the time that Spence took up preaching in 1878 things had changed somewhat, although, as Scott notes, "change in the role of women, both in behaviour and self-image was slow and this was not all due to male resistance."[150] Resistance to change by both men and women was no doubt rooted in the ideology of middle-class respectability and separate spheres, as well as the association of the intellect with the masculine, with Martha Turner herself reluctant initially to accept the role of pastor; as she remarked in her first sermon, "it seemed to me at first not quite in accordance with the fitness of things that Unitarianism, which represents an essentially masculine order of thought, should be represented by a woman." She goes on to explain the circumstances surrounding her appointment, which was mainly due to the difficulties of finding a man with enough leisure to take on the work involved: "quite naturally, therefore, the work devolved upon one who had leisure. Hence it has come to pass, through the mere force of circumstances, that I find myself to-day in the somewhat unusual position of the recognized pastor of a church."[151] Turner was undervaluing her abilities, however, for Catherine Spence was inspired and motivated by hearing Turner's preaching, writing in her autobiography:

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[149] Ibid., 52.

[150] Ibid., 53.

[151] Both quotations from Martha Turner, *Sermon, 23 November 1873: The Priestly Office and the Christian Teacher* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1873), 10.

> I was thrilled by her exquisite voice, by her earnestness, and by her reverence … [W]hen I heard a highly educated and exceptionally able woman conducting the services all through, and especially reading the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments with so much intelligence that they seemed to take on new meaning, I felt how much the world had been losing for so many centuries.[152]

On the whole, the Unitarian church in Australia provided opportunities for women, whether by accident or not, to take a more public role in religion than was possible in England, revealing the possibility of shaking off the more conservative traditions of the old world. Spence began preaching publicly in 1878 when she had already been writing fiction and journalism for over 20 years. Whereas these latter activities had gradually acquired respectability as professions for women, preaching was still very much a masculine preserve in Australia, particularly in the established denominations of Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism; evangelical women, on the other hand, were, as Hilary Carey observes, active as female missionaries, lay preachers and Sunday school teachers …"[153] These circumstances and the opportunity provided for smaller churches to attract followers in the face of the squabbling of the main sectarian protagonists in the late nineteenth century,[154] suggest that women had more opportunities to break free of restrictions on their roles in minority religions in Australia.

The participation by Spence and Turner in the religious discourse of nineteenth-century Australia through their sermons and prayers, albeit in a minority denomination, gave these women a voice in a discourse that was generally dominated by men. Spence was also able to use her fiction, as she did through the character of St Bridget, to challenge some of the harsher aspects of orthodox religion. In *Handfasted*, Spence depicts another woman overcoming the power of religious patriarchy and founding a utopian colony that implemented the unusual concept of handfasting, or trial marriage. Raised by an aunt who

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[152] Spence, *Autobiography*, 53.

[153] Carey, *Believing in Australia*, 12.

[154] See Ibid., 93-5.

subscribed to the Roman Catholic movement known as Jansenism, Marguerite Keith has been taught that the will was subject to

> the higher religious motives which ought to govern the life; and these for women ought to be interpreted and laid down by the Church speaking through its priests … Humility, acquiescence, patience in all possible walks of life, were the virtues which crowned woman most gloriously …. (160).

After the death of her aunt, Marguerite returns to her parents in England who want to convert her to the "Reformed Faith," ensuring that the Calvinistic temper of Jansenism continues to influence her.[155] The discovery by the nineteenth-century utopian traveller, Hugh Keith, of Marguerite's diary written on blank pages within a copy of Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* gives Spence the chance to demonstrate how destructive to women Calvinism could be, and also perhaps reveals something more of Spence's own religious struggle.[156] The discovery allows the revelation of Keith's pantheistic views on religion and the fact that, like Spence, he had endured "a period of intellectual struggle approaching to a spiritual experience …," eventually reaching a compromise in which "morality was the only religion that I had any tangible hold of," with "the service of man appear[ing] to be the most safe and profitable way of serving God" (157). Demonstrating the extent of Spence's intellectual investigation of the spiritual dilemma she faced, she locates Marguerite's description of her battle with Calvinism in a book which showed "neither the scientific side of the great mathematician nor the polemic side of the masterly author of the Provincial letters," but,

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[155] Generally speaking, all Protestant churches dating from the Reformation are part of what is known as the "reformed faith," which tends to follow Presbyterianism. Bridgwater and Kurtz, eds., *The Columbia Encyclopedia*.

Jansenism, named after Cornelis Jansen (1585-1638), a Dutch Roman Catholic theologian, tried to return people to "greater personal holiness" and held strongly to the doctrine of predestination. Probably the most famous Jansenist is Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), a French scientist, mathematician and philosopher. See Bridgwater and Kurtz, eds., *The Columbia Encyclopedia*.

[156] Pascal's religious writings were published posthumously as *Pensées de M. Pascal sur la religion et sur quelques autre sujets* (1670). He writes of his "belief in the inadequacy of reason to solve man's difficulties or to satisfy his hopes." What was necessary was "mystic faith for [a] true understanding of the universe and its meaning to man." Bridgwater and Kurtz, eds., *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. Hence Pascal's wager which argues that theistic belief is of greater value than unbelief if it turns out to be true that God exists; "…if it turns out to be false then one has lost little, if anything." See Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 647. Cf. Spence's sympathy for Robert Browning's ideas, noted in her autobiography (63), that an individual does not lose anything by believing that scepticism is not necessarily more honest or productive than faith and that "human reason … proves nothing one way or the other." Donald Thomas, *Robert Browning: A Life within Life* (London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), 268. See also 129-35, 164-9, 266-68.

rather, "the thoughts of the Augustinian or Calvinistic Roman Catholic" (155) who believed that reason was insufficient to solve man's problems.

The lessons of Marguerite's youth about women's place in the world are reinforced by her father and a Presbyterian minister, who are keen for her to abandon the "dogmas of an infallible church, priests, and sacraments …" (162) and submit to their rule. After marrying the zealous and ambitious minister, Archibald Keith, under pressure from her parents, she suffers greatly from his lack of human sympathy and his pious fervour:

> Archibald Keith was fitted admirably for the church militant … What a covenanter he would have made, what a hillside preacher, carrying his life in his hand, and ready to draw the sword of the Lord and of Gideon on the minions of a persecuting government! What a victim of the rack and the thumbscrew he would have been, calm, imperturbable and defiant of all that men could do against the truth as he saw it! … his own sense of personal sin was always with regard to the attitude of his soul to God, and never with regard to his conduct to man. The scrupulousness of his conscience questioned the strength of his faith and his complete absorption in divine things, but never troubled him with doubts as to whether he had been fair in his judgments or gentle in his dealings with his flock and his family (172-3).

He burns any of her books he thinks are profane or frivolous, appropriates her dowry to pay a debt incurred by his side of the family, and makes her feel like his "housekeeper and upper servant" (175). He imposes a rule of strict Sabbatarianism on his poor and hard-working parishioners in the small Scottish village of Colbrandspath, and censures any pleasures such as dancing and drinking, while retreating behind "religious dogmas and bewail[ing] the corruption of unregenerate human nature …." (179). To Marguerite,

> the monstrous structure [of Calvinism] which had been built on a few assumptions, a few texts disjointed from the rest of Scripture and strained to the uttermost seemed to show injustice, cruelty and blind partiality on the part of the Creator, and did not in any way solve the great riddle of the Universe (179).

Marguerite struggles with her religion in an attempt to cope with her husband's behaviour, but she can see no path to peace. She finds little consolation in the struggles of Christian in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, thinking that

> the giants I had to fight, and the doubts I had to dispel were very different from those he encountered with the weapons of All-Prayer and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. All human nature cannot be changed by a petition or an

> apt quotation from Holy Writ, and my spiritual foes took on the appearance of angels of light (181).

The "spirited and imaginative" girl had become an unhappy, doubting woman who "had had no free will all [her] life," and who "had been surrounded by a network of traditionary duties and overmastering superiors …." (181). Such is her state as the family departs for the new world in which her husband hopes to guide the settlers and found "a pure Kirk in the wilderness" (187). But the death of Marguerite's husband on the voyage to Central America and her arrival in Columba change everything.

Marguerite is called upon by this new community to be their spiritual guide in the absence of an official minister, for she is assumed, in a nice turn of irony, to have been influenced by her husband's religious teaching. She finds in her own preaching and prayer, and in the active life she now leads, a new sense of happiness and empowerment:

> In my troubles heretofore I had found no help or refuge in prayer - the attempt had always made me feel more rebellious - but now when prayer could be followed by working to the best of my judgement and to the utmost of my ability I found it helpful and inspiring (197).

Her very personal sense of empowerment is focused on a transformation of society, in which the darker aspects of Calvinism give way to a freer, more rational and more tolerant way of life. She initiates the practice of handfasting and an innovative system of child custody which have resulted in the elimination of prostitution, the notion of illegitimacy and the sexual guilt of women.[157] The church in Columba is a place of worship but it also operates as the schoolhouse, theatre and dance-hall. Sundays are not confined to religious activities but can be used for leisure or work as well, foreshadowing the Sunday Liberation Society in Melbourne in the 1880s which wanted facilities such as public transport and cultural activities made available on the Sabbath, campaigners for which included the Unitarians, Henry Gyles Turner and Martha Turner.[158] There are no courts or prisons, no workhouses for the poor, with crimes against another person punished by service to the victim or the victim's family. The revenue from Columba's mines is public revenue, and

[157] See ch. 3 for a more detailed discussion of this.

[158] Scott, *The Halfway House to Infidelity*, 71.

land is not owned by an individual or family, but only leased to them. Thus, Marguerite and her fellow settlers overthrow long-standing and conservative traditions of the old world. The worst aspects of the patriarchy that governs important institutions such as the law, religion, the family and the economic system are abolished and replaced with new customs by this "little band thrown out of the pale of Christendom, [who were] forced to make a law and government for ourselves of a republican or perhaps rather of a communal nature" (209).

Strong religious women like Marguerite, who rebel against the power of the patriarchy existed in real life, as the radical, religious women discussed in *Radical Femininity* and *Eve and the New Jerusalem* indicate. Eliza Sharples, for instance, devised her own brand of radical theology and politics after rejecting Wesleyan Methodism in 1831-2. Although Sharples was far more radical than either Marguerite or Spence, there are some common elements in the stories of the two women. Spence's public interest in political reform, initially through her advocacy of proportional representation and later on the matter of women's suffrage, parallels Sharples' promotion of the first Reform Bill through her lectures and journalism. Both women believed that true faith involved the pursuit of knowledge, not the observation of superstitious rituals and both believed in "the power of words to construct knowledge."[159]

Using words to challenge the dominant theological discourse was a task they both undertook in varying ways, but an examination of the way in which they reinterpreted the myth of Eve and the orthodox patriarchal conception of her role in the fall of humankind can explain some of the similarities and differences between them. Spence was by no means among the first women of the nineteenth century to reject the doctrine of original sin. As Helen Rogers observes, apart from Eliza Sharples who offered her own interpretation of the Fall, the theme was taken up by Owenite women such as Eliza Macauley, Margaret

[159] See Helen Rogers, "' The Prayer, the Passion and the Reason' of Eliza Sharples: Freethought, Women's Rights and Republicanism, 1832-52", in *Radical Femininity*, ed. Eileen Janes Yeo, 52-78 .

Chappelsmith and Emma Martin in the 1830s and 1840s.[160] So also did Mary Wollstonecraft, who attended the chapel and studied the sermons of the eighteenth-century Unitarian Richard Price, writing in 1794 that "we must get entirely clear of all the notions … of original sin … [to] leave room for the expansion of the human heart."[161]

Replacing the notion of Eve's guilt as justification for women's eternal inferiority to men is Sharples' radical interpretation that celebrates Eve as "the personification of wisdom, of liberty, of resistance to tyranny; the mother of human knowledge; the proper help meet for man."[162] She presents Eve as a symbol of progress, according to Rogers: "by taking the fruit of knowledge, Eve had created human society, for her expulsion with Adam from the Garden of Eden marked the beginnings of human progress."[163] In *Handfasted*, Spence uses Liliard at least partially as a representation of Eve. This is particularly evident in the scene where Hugh and Liliard leave Columba and set forth for the new, non-utopian world that Liliard sees as the source of the knowledge she so longs for. She is leaving a paradise where women's sexual guilt is non-existent and where women's sexual behaviour and knowledge are accepted as the norm, a world that rejects the notion that women caused the fall of humankind, or indeed that humankind fell because of the tasting of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. While not going as far as Sharples does in reinterpreting the myth of Eve, Spence nevertheless represents women through the character of Liliard and the other female inhabitants of Columba similarly, as other than "the bearer of original sin."[164] Liliard's quest for knowledge in the "real" fallen world seems to invert lapsarian theology altogether and make a mockery of the sexual double standard, especially when she realises what that

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[160] Ibid., 59.

[161] *French Revolution* (1794), quoted in Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, 103. See also Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 177. She writes in the latter that "though the cry of irreligion, or even atheism, be raised against me, I will simply declare that were an angel from Heaven to tell me that Moses' beautiful poetical cosmogony, and the account of the fall of man, were literally true, I could not believe what my reason told me was derogatory to the character of the Supreme Being …." For more on Wollstonecraft and religion, see Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, ch.3.

[162] Eliza Sharples, *Isis*, 7 July 1832, quoted in Rogers, "' The Prayer, the Passion and the Reason' of Eliza Sharples," 59.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

double standard has done to women. In the outside world, good and evil are not associated with knowledge but with the double standard. Spence does not explicitly link Eve's role with the idea of liberty but she does make an association between Liliard's search for knowledge and her departure from the "sleepy hollow" of Columba, in which she had only "half-lived" (217). The freedom to experience misery and anguish is just as necessary to Liliard for a full life, no matter how pleasant happiness and security may be. Without the liberty to participate in all that the outside world has to offer, her knowledge can be only partial.

On the subject of women's right to speak in public, Sharples was scathing about the Pauline prohibition:

> We have been worse conditioned than Asiatic slaves; for, with the name of liberty, we have been the slave of silly etiquette and custom. St. Paul forbade women to speak in churches, and they, who have made St. Paul an authority, have worn long hair and caps, and hats and veils, and have held their tongues in churches, until their whole power of speech has been concentrated for domestic scolding. Suppressed speech gathers into a storm; but freedom of discussion is the most wholesome exercise in which we can be engaged …. It would be medicine for nearly all the ills that effect [sic] the forlorn condition of elderly maiden ladies.[165]

Spence, too, rejects Paul's instructions in *A Week in the Future*, where women are just as able to minister to congregations as men; the spokesperson from the future declares that "we owe no slavish obedience to a temporary instruction of Paul, even if that was what he meant …" (126).[166] Spence saw the restriction on women's ability to speak in public as the result of "law and custom [which] have put a bridle on the tongues of women."[167] As noted on page 38, she was aware of the pioneering nature of her own public speaking, notwithstanding the fact that she "felt very nervous, and as if my knees were giving way

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[165] Eliza Sharples, *Isis*, 25 February 1832, quoted in Rogers, "'The Prayer, the Passion and the Reason,'" 60.

[166] See the first letter of Paul to Timothy, II, 8-12. "I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting hands without anger or quarrelling; also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent." Bible, Revised Standard Version, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957)

[167] Spence, *Autobiography*, 45.

…”[168] Spence went on to preach, by her count, over a hundred sermons in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and in the United States and Canada.[169]

Preaching provided a platform that was both public and respectable for women to speak from and it therefore possessed great appeal for Spence. Her audience might not have been large, but it gave her an opening which women had been taking advantage of since the eighteenth century (despite Samuel Johnson’s discouragement).[170] Spence did not constantly challenge male interpretations of scripture as Sharples or some of the radical Unitarian women did, nor did she use the pulpit to promote women’s emancipation, but she took the opportunity to enlighten her listeners on a wide range of subjects that often crossed over from the spiritual to the social and political. While she had been writing on matters related to social welfare and social justice for many years by the time she began preaching, for many women such participation in public religious discourse via preaching and writing on theological matters often led to a broader engagement in public discourse; as Sue Morgan argues, “religion had the capacity to cross fixed spatial boundaries because it was experienced as a private, personal source of empowerment which might inspire women to move into public and political areas of life.”[171] Spence seemed to be aware of religion’s liberating potential for women before she became a preacher. In *Clara Morison*, Clara comforts herself in her gloomier moments by writing in a journal and composing sermons, an act described by Susan Magarey as one of rebellion in an environment where “the responsibility for presenting and interpreting sacred doctrine was a privilege reserved [for men], [so that] Clara’s sermons represent a secret appropriation to a servant girl of the most powerful discourse available in the Paradise of Dissent.”[172]

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[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid., 53.

[170] For more on the history of women preachers, see Krueger, *The Reader's Repentance;* Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*.

In one of his most (in)famous observations, Johnson noted that “a woman’s preaching is like a dog’s walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.” James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D.*, 31 July 1763, (New York: Dell, 1960); abridged by Edmund Fuller.

[171] Morgan, "Women, Religion and Feminism," 15.

[172] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 67.

It is difficult to say how much of an effect Unitarianism had on Spence's opinions on political and social reform, but her antipathy to certain aspects of Presbyterianism from a relatively young age suggest that she was already treading a more enlightened path than was consistent with the Calvinistic teachings of her youth. Her religious beliefs, whether she had formally rejected Presbyterianism or not, did nevertheless have a powerful influence on the broad range of her public utterances, from her feminism and social justice advocacy through to her ideas for economic and political reform. Although she did not explicitly base her defence of women's right to improved equality and financial independence on a religious foundation, there is no doubt that British Unitarianism and its radical tradition contributed to her thinking on the subject. Given the lack of any women's rights movement in mid-nineteenth-century Australia, and the nascent state of Unitarianism in Australia, it seems reasonable to conclude that, despite her active role, the Australian church had less of an influence than the British church on Spence's intellectual development. There is little written evidence to enable us to assume that American Unitarians or feminists had much effect on Spence until at least the 1890s.

The same can be said of Spence's increasing commitment to social justice and social reform, which were grounded in her own rejection of materialism and a desire to raise up the lower classes. The lack of engagement by the Unitarian church in Adelaide with broader philanthropic activities suggests that the impetus for Spence's activities and writing came from elsewhere. While she was supported by her friends in Adelaide, her religious and intellectual motivations were more likely to have come from those significant Victorian intellectual figures whose battles with faith and doubt resembled her own, as well as from British Unitarian reformers. The combination of rational Enlightenment thought that provided at least some of the foundation for Unitarianism and the values of duty and service contained within Christianity formed a solid basis for Spence's belief system. Like George Eliot and John Stuart Mill, the texture of Spence's moral response "was marked at least as much by an obsession with the role of altruism and a concern for the cultivation of feelings

as it was by any commitment to the premisses of self-interest and rational calculation."[173] This kind of dichotomy was typical of Spence, whose moral values were often quite conservative in relation to social welfare, for example, but whose rejection of orthodox Christianity and its superstition and concern with appearance, represented by the waste and ostentation of the middle and upper classes, indicates a radicalism that harks back to British radical dissenters such as Joseph Priestley.

Without the experience of doubt and the discovery of a faith that eliminated superstition and combined rationalism and human sympathy, Spence would have found it difficult to reconcile her religion with a world-view that became increasingly progressive as she grew older. Her conversion provided her with the means of reducing the tension that Gail Malmgreen observes lies within women's spirituality: "religion as opiate and an embodiment of ideological and institutional sexism, and religion as transcendent and liberating force."[174] She realised that both faith and rationalism were necessary to improve the world when she wrote "as what we know never influences the conduct when it is not connected with what we feel, in this so-called iron age, the great desideratum is to touch the heart and conscience while we inform and discipline the mind."[175] Unitarianism's rejection of the doctrines of original sin, atonement and eternal punishment, as well as its understanding of Jesus Christ as "the ideal of spiritual and moral excellence," lay at the heart of the Unitarian concern for the welfare and progress of humanity. Unitarians aimed at achieving utopia in this world rather than in the hereafter, as David Hilliard notes: "through the moral self-improvement of individuals, and with Jesus as a model, society could eventually be transformed into a real 'Kingdom of God' on earth."[176] For Spence, this was the foundation of all of the other intellectual, political and social ideas that she took on board at various stages of her life; utopian socialism, feminism, proportional representation, liberalism, criminal reform, the elimination of poverty and cooperation were all ways of

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[173] Collini, *Public Moralists*, 62.

[174] Gail Malmgreen, ed., *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 7.

[175] [C.H. Spence], "Boarding-Out System of South Australia." I. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March 1878.

[176] Hilliard, "Dissenters from Dissent: The Unitarians in South Australia," 95.

expressing her core belief in the possibility of human progress. While she never subscribed to the secular nationalism that was prevalent in late nineteenth-century Australia, Spence took the opportunity that was offered to women by the relative freedom and equality of life in Australia to present her moral values in a variety of forms that did not exclude the explicitly religious. She encouraged her fellow Australians to emulate the spirit of Christ's sympathy and charity towards all human beings, and articulated the doubts and fears that many were experiencing in the nineteenth century, expressing hope for the future in a country that she believed had immense potential. The next chapter will discuss how her views on the progress of humanity evolved over the second half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 5 The Idea of Progress

Catherine Spence carved out a role for herself in the mid- to late nineteenth century by formulating and disseminating ideas about how society could progress. She considered and transformed many of the new ideas which were emanating from Europe, Britain and America, and discussed how they could be put into practice in the new world of Australia. Influenced by Enlightenment and Unitarian beliefs in progress and reason, by Victorian intellectuals and reformers, and by life in colonial Australia, she wrote about how Australia might approach an optimum level of progress not just in a material sense, but in moral and social terms. This chapter will consider the contribution that Spence made to the discourse surrounding the idea of progress in Australia, arguing that her attempts to explain and question dominant ideologies about progress helped her fellow citizens understand many of the changes taking place in the nineteenth century. I will examine Spence's articulation in her fiction and non-fiction writing of the changes that she saw contributing to the social, economic, political and moral progress of society.

Many white settlers in the early part of the nineteenth century regarded Australia, and in particular South Australia, as untainted by old world conventions and habits, and therefore as fertile ground for implementing the best ideas available to ultimately stand as a model of progress. Like many in the nineteenth century, Catherine Spence was greatly attracted to the idea of progress, arguing that "orderly progress is the right line of advance for free countries."[1] She also recognised that the substantial material advances made by human beings in the nineteenth century were not necessarily accompanied by any moral improvement, nor did they lead to the elimination of one of the great social problems of the times, poverty. Like other famous doubters of the era such as John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle, who held "progress up to the light, seeing its flaws and pretensions even as their society rose to unprecedented heights of wealth, production and human

[1] Catherine Spence, "Australian Answers to Some American Problems," lecture, Boston, 8 December 1893, SLSA archives.

possibility,"[2] she wanted people to consider commonly accepted notions about progress more sceptically. Also important to Spence was that progress be understood in a more qualitative sense, as Frederic Harrison understood it when he wrote "we are all in the habit of measuring success by *products*, whilst the point is, how are the products consumed, and by whom, and what sort of lives are passed by the producers?"[3]

Spence's view of history reflects her concern with moral progress. She regarded the impetus behind the French revolution as worthier, and more likely to produce a good society, than the Renaissance or English and European revolutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Renaissance, for all of its dedication to learning and art, was accompanied by "moral chaos"; its

> unconscious but complacent acceptance by even good men of the most impure literature, the most base conduct, and the most treacherous statecraft, along with the freedom and the beauty which broke forth from the tomb of mediaeval ignorance, make the Renaissance a standing puzzle to moralists even more than to theologians.[4]

The religious wars of the English Reformation were altogether anti-social, while the other revolutions of that period "were religious or dynastic rather than national and they were still less social," unlike

> the great French Revolution [which] aimed at social regeneration as the one thing needful, and demanded for that end new political machinery to replace the effete institutions under which the privileged classes had crushed down the people of France.[5]

Such a holistic view of progress was evident in Spence's utopian novella, *A Week in the Future* (1888-9), when she referred to the nineteenth century as "the beginning of the age of conscious evolution," using it as a point of comparison with the supposedly more

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[2] Bruce McPherson, *Between Two Worlds: Victorian Ambivalence About Progress* (Washington: University Press of America, 1983), viii.

[3] Frederic Harrison, "A Few Words about the Nineteenth Century," *Fortnightly Review* 31, no. 1 April (1882): 423.

[4] CHS, "The Modern Spirit," *The Australasian*, 28 June 1879.

[5] Ibid.

advanced era that her time-traveller had arrived in. The implication was that the theories of evolution propounded by such thinkers as Charles Darwin, Alfred Wallace and Charles Lyell in the nineteenth century were not restricted to biological or geological evolution, but, as Herbert Spencer had suggested, could also be applied to the progress of society more generally. Spencer's theory of human development argued for evolution as the very engine of social progress; he wrote that "the change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous is displayed in the progress of civilization as a whole, as well as in the progress of every nation; and is still going on with increasing rapidity."[6] What he perceived as the "law of organic progress" applied to all forms of life, including "the development of Society, of Government, of Manufactures, of Commerce, of Language, Literature, Science, Art …."[7]

This conflation of evolution and progress, which was common in the Victorian era and implicit in *A Week in the Future*, was less related to Darwin's biological theories than to the social interpretation given by people such as Spencer; as John Nisbet argues, "theories of *social* evolution in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries … have their origin in what Comte referred to in the 1830s as his 'law of progress,' emphatically *not* in the works of Darwin, Wallace, and Mendel."[8] Darwin, in his theory of evolution or "natural selection," had confined himself to explaining how simpler life forms changed into more complex ones, with minimal references to the implications for human life; when asked by Wallace if he would discuss human origins in *The Origin of Species*, Darwin replied that "I think I shall avoid the whole subject, as so surrounded with prejudices."[9] He did, however, suggest in a letter to Charles Lyell that humankind would probably continue to advance and that he "[cared] not much whether we are looked at as mere savages in a remotely

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[6] Essay, "Progress: Its Law and Cause," 1857, quoted in Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 234.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 175. Nisbet's italics.

[9] Letter to Wallace, 1858, *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, quoted in Randall Keynes, *Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, His Daughter and Human Evolution* (London: Fourth Estate, 2001), 230.

distant future."[10] Thus, scientists themselves contributed to the interchangeability of evolution and progress, as Nisbet observes, with Darwin repeatedly using the term "progress … to describe a process or phenomenon that would today be put under the label of 'evolution' or 'development' in biology."[11]

The problematic nature of the term "progress" was not confined to its interpretation and usage in the nineteenth century, for many twentieth century historians and philosophers have differed over its origins and meaning. John Nisbet, for example, argues that classical thought contains aspects of the idea of progress, while others such as J.B. Bury argue that it was not until the eighteenth century that the idea of social progress was first discussed by the Abbé de Saint Pierre.[12] Some have suggested that the idea of human progress originates in mediaeval Christian conception of providence, as Robert Solomon notes.[13] In terms of a definition, it can mean "a single temporal progress of all peoples from the most 'primitive' to the most advanced," or merely a "rapid improvement in the material conditions of existence."[14] For Bury, it means that "civilisation has moved, is moving, and will move in a desirable direction,"[15] raising the question of what is desirable. Then there is the matter of whether or not material progress is sufficient for progress to occur more generally, as Auguste Comte would have it, with the cohesiveness of human social life causing political, moral and intellectual progress to be inseparable from material progress.[16]

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[10] Quoted in Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress, and Decadence* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966), 48.

[11] Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 174.

[12] John Bagnell Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 128; Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 10.

[13] Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 722.

[14] Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion* (1929), ed. (Peru, Ill.: Sherwood Sugden and Company, [1991]), 6; Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 722.

[15] Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, 2.

[16] Ibid., 293.

The idea of progress as a process of continual advancement of society was certainly accepted by the eighteenth century, as expressed by Edward Gibbon in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1781). In attempting to allay the fears of those who saw the possibility of the mistakes of ancient Rome being repeated in the eighteenth century, Gibbon wrote that mankind could "acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased, and still increases the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue of the human race."[17] Faith in the idea of progress was adhered to by a range of English Enlightenment figures including Erasmus Darwin and the Unitarians Richard Price, Joseph Priestley and Josiah Wedgwood, leading Roy Porter to conclude that "progress proved the ultimate Enlightenment gospel. It kindled optimism and pointed to a programme: the promise of a better future would expose and highlight whatever remained wrong in the present."[18]

Much Victorian intellectual engagement with the idea of progress saw it as a natural forward movement in human thought leading to the creation of civilised states, with England being one of the most civilised. Thomas Babington Macaulay, for example, wrote of "the England which we know and love, the classic ground of liberty and philosophy, the school of all knowledge, the mart of all trade," whose history "is emphatically the history of progress."[19] Charles Dickens, who chronicled many of England's social problems in his novels, expressed the hope that progress would occur within a relatively short time-frame in his preface to *The Pickwick Papers*:

> Who knows, but by the time the series reaches its conclusion, it may be discovered that there are even magistrates in town and country, who should be taught to shake hands every day with Common-sense and Justice; that even Poor

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[17] Porter, *Enlightenment*, 426.

Gibbon, 1781, ch. 38, quoted in Porter, *Enlightenment*, 426-7.

[18] Porter, *Enlightenment*, 445. Erasmus Darwin, for example, grounded his theory of progress in evolution: "human capacities were the products of biological and physiological development which extended to 'the progress of the Mind.'" Porter, 444. Richard Price wrote that "it may not be too extravagant to expect that … the progress of improvement will not cease till it has excluded from the earth most of its worst evils …." Quoted in Porter, 425. See also David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[19] "Sir James Mackintosh," July 1835, in Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays* (London: William Collins, 1965), 169&68.

> Laws may have mercy on the weak, the aged, and unfortunate; that Schools, on the broad principles of Christianity, are the best adornment for the length and breadth of this civilized land … that the universal diffusion of common means of decency and health is as much the right of the poorest of the poor, as it is indispensable to the safety of the rich, and of the State ….[20]

Frederic Harrison, despite questioning the materialism of his age, was able to write towards the end of the nineteenth century that "the cause of progress is bound up with every principle worth having; and material progress is an indispensable step in general progress …."[21] There were critics and pessimists but, as Christopher Dawson observes, by the middle of the nineteenth century, "the Idea of Progress … dominated the three main currents of European thought, Rationalist Liberalism, Revolutionary Socialism and Transcendental Idealism. It evoked all the enthusiasm and faith of a genuine religion."[22]

Part of the reason for its domination was the association of progress with nineteenth-century scientific advances including that of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which conferred intellectual respectability on the idea of social evolution by giving it connotations of the rationality of science. This permitted social theorists such as Jane Hume Clapperton to appropriate evolutionary theory for their own purposes. Thus Clapperton was able to write that "the doctrine of evolution when thoroughly understood and logically applied to our present social state" enables the evolutionist to "perceive the social forces that are at work amidst apparent confusion. He apprehends their approximate causes or antecedents …."[23] It is therefore not surprising to discover Catherine Spence equating evolution with progress in *A Week in the Future*, heavily influenced as that work was by Clapperton's theories, which themselves were an amalgam of Darwin's and Spencer's ideas. Also borrowing heavily from Robert Owen, Clapperton's arguments, and consequently those of Spence, centre on the notion that by improving the external circumstances of the lives of individuals, human nature will

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[20] Preface to the Cheap Edition, 1847, Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7), ed. Robert L. Patten (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972; reprint, 4th), 46.

[21] Harrison, "A Few Words About the Nineteenth Century," 413.

[22] Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 201.

[23] Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism*, 27.

improve.[24] Changing "objective phenomena" such as "the conditions of his birth, the method of his education, the circumstances of his life" will inevitably move the individual towards the achievement of "intellectual clearness and emotional beneficence."[25] Such an evolution is depicted by Spence: all children are wanted by their parents and everyone is able to live free from poverty; a rounded education that teaches morality is universally available; cooperative homes in which several families live in harmony and mutual respect have become the new mode of living. The London of 1988 that Emily Bethel, the narrator of *A Week in the Future*, describes no longer rests on great disparities in wealth or class; relationships are based on courtesy and respect, with "the intelligent pursuit of happiness" the goal of all. Just as Herbert Spencer had theorised in 1857, all aspects of human life have been altered.

A Week in the Future represents the evolution that had taken place in Spence's own thinking about social progress. The small changes that Clara Morison experiences in Spence's first published novel in 1854 reveal her early ideas about the role that can be played in the progress of a young colony by the kind of migrant represented by Clara. The flexibility, adaptability and educated intelligence of a young woman forced to migrate from Scotland to Australia become organic elements in the evolution of a colonial society. Clara's personal development from a timid, shy girl lacking in the practical skills required by her new community, parallel what Spence saw as the progress of colonial South Australia; as Fiona Giles argues, "Clara's development as a heroine is used to represent a sense of emergent South Australianness."[26]

In *Mr Hogarth's Will*, published ten years later, Jane Melville assumes a similar representativeness about social progress. Her physical and emotional journey from Britain to Australia contrasts the restrictions caused by matters of class and gender in the old world with the possibilities for success in a young country for those who would work

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[24] For more information on this aspect of Robert Owen's ideas, see p.129ff.

[25] Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism*, 27-8.

[26] Giles, *Too Far Everywhere*, 34.

hard and contribute their skills and knowledge in both public and private arenas. The evolution here is not so much related to the development of a colony but to the potential for personal progress when people are liberated from judgments based on criteria over which they have no control. While Jane finds no feminist utopia in Australia, she does at least establish a financial independence that she could only dream of in England. Similarly, working-class characters like Peggy Walker and her family, who also migrate to Australia, become happy and successful citizens, rather than being held back by lack of opportunities and narrow-minded notions of what they could achieve in Scotland. This kind of representation has something in common with the sentimental imaginings of Englishmen such as Samuel Sidney, who saw Australia as "an El Dorado and an Arcadia combined," but Spence never let her imagination run away with her; as Helen Thomson notes, Spence was "scrupulously honest about the experience of migration. Australia was no El Dorado where fortunes could be guaranteed even for the most unsatisfactory of younger sons."[27] It is possible to see emerging a trace of the 1890s in which a sense of nationalism combined with humanism, described by Patrick Morgan as follows:

> … Australian and Enlightenment ideas neatly dovetail, and Australia is seen as an almost-ready-made repository of progressive qualities, a new higher stage on the human evolutionary scale. Both views believed that Europe was weighed down by inert customs and traditions, and that a fresh start had to be made. Both looked to the future and believed that progress was inevitable.[28]

The pride that Spence felt in her new land is also evident in the contrast between Australia and England in *Hugh Lindsay's Guest* (1867). The effete aristocracy of England is characterised by the elderly Lord Darlington, who manipulates and lies his way into the affections of the young and innocent English heroine, Amy Staunton. Clichéd though this particular storyline is, it is effective in highlighting the attractiveness of the manly, young Australian hero, Allan Lindsay, and the hard-working, honest way of life that he represents. Spence makes clear in this novel her contempt for the artificiality and

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[27] *The Three Colonies of Australia: New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia*, 1852, quoted in F.G. Clarke, *The Land of Contrarieties: British Attitudes to the Australian Colonies 1828-1855* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1977), 135.

Thomson, Introduction to *Mr Hogarth's Will*, xii.

monotony of much English social life when compared to the industry and egalitarian nature of Australian life. When she observed a tendency in Australian society occurring during the 1870s towards the kind of British social sterility she disliked, she decried "the costliness and the artificiality of English hospitality [which] is creeping in upon us with our growth in wealth."[29] She wanted to see in Australia a form of social intercourse similar to that of European society, with salons and *conversaziones* allowing people of both sexes and all ages to engage in intelligent and uplifting discussions. Far better than the system of "exclusively feminine calls and afternoon teas" would be a

> system of receptions on a given evening, when people of both sexes and different ages might meet without formal invitation. If it served no other purpose, [this would] inaugurate a style of party in which older people might have a fair share of pleasure, in lieu of the martyrdom of chaperonage … [N]o social feature in France is more attractive than that which makes of the white-haired grandmother the most delightful and respect-inspiring type of Europe.[30]

Ultimately, however, she wanted an improvement in social relations that addressed more than the external manifestations she describes here, so that *A Week in the Future* can be seen as a compendium of the suggestions and hints that are interspersed throughout her novels and articles over the previous 30 years.

Some aspects of the social evolution which Spence depicts in *A Week in the Future* are objectionable to modern sensibilities, with "idiot" babies being put to death at birth to prevent the possible degeneration of the race. When the visitor from the past, Emily Bethel, protests mildly about the summary nature of this treatment, her relative from the future justifies it as "really the best thing to do to put such imperfect and helpless beings painlessly out of existence" (36). As Lesley Ljungdahl observes, "with modern hindsight about the possible distortion of eugenic theories, Spence's approval seems deplorably ingenuous,"[31] but all Spence is doing is taking the eugenic theories of Francis Galton to their logical and rational extreme. Galton argued that heredity was the key determinant of

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[28] Morgan, "Australian Nationalism as a Religion Substitute", 59.

[29] [C.H. Spence], "Equality as an Influence on Society and Manners," *Register*, 9 August 1878.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ljungdahl, Prologue, 13.

human character and that controlling human breeding would lead to an improvement in mankind. He was, however, more supportive of "positive" eugenics which emphasised "the need for more intellectuals rather than few paupers and imbeciles," than of the elimination of the unfittest that Spence envisaged.[32] Jane Clapperton agreed with Galton's argument, declaring that "man" had the power and the duty "to improve the physical, intellectual, and moral structure of his race, by intelligent forethought and careful action, in exercising the function of propagating his kind."[33] Rather than advocating that those "afflicted by hereditary taint" remain celibate, however, as Galton did, she argued that "the ignorant … must be led into the right path by various social forces, such as prohibitory and attractive legislation, the influence of example, and the well-directed control of an enlightened public opinion," all of which Spence incorporates into her future society, but even Clapperton stops short of killing off the afflicted.[34]

There are indications elsewhere in her writing that such extreme utilitarianism was not Spence's ideal way of achieving social progress. Her compassion and sympathy, which are largely absent from the highly dispassionate tone of *A Week in the Future*, show through most obviously in an article entitled "Life, Health and Climate" published in 1878. Referring to attitudes towards sufferers of tuberculosis, she reveals the religious faith that underpinned her sympathetic attitudes towards her fellow human beings, together with arguments against the kinds of eugenic theories that she wrote about in *A Week in the Future*, and which were proposed by social theorists such as Galton and Clapperton:

> Those who in their Spartan treatment of present evils for future advantage would recommend the drowning of sickly children … who are indignant at the marriage of any one not so robust as themselves, forget that enforced celibacy may develop the very diseases they dread, and that in the natural human compassion for the feeble and the suffering there is a divinely implanted instinct which cannot be

[32] Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), 31.

[33] Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism*, 335.

[34] Ibid., 335-6. For further discussion of Galton's theories, see Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction between Biological and Social Theory* (Brighton, UK: Harvester Press, 1980), ch.6.

> altogether wrong or mischievous. It is not easy to conceive a world without sin and sorrow and disease. It might be a very much better world, but … life itself would lose its deepest meanings, its tenderest affections, its most exalting faith, if it were not for that shortness and that uncertainty which it is the fashion of so many well-meaning people to deplore or to despise.[35]

Spence is rejecting here Spencer's theory of the survival of the fittest, suggesting that the spiritual basis of respect for human life can contribute to a different kind of ideal society. For Spence, theories of evolution do not necessarily contradict the existence of God, but, rather, support the notion that human beings' lack of perfection provides a deeper meaning to life that might otherwise disappear. God's role in the process was not prescriptive but to "indicate the spirit in which social reforms and the betterment of human conditions should be sought for and worked out."[36] Thus there was no conflict between religion and theories of evolution for Spence: evolution was God's way of making the world progress, an opinion held by other nineteenth-century Protestants such as George Clarke, a Congregational minister in Hobart, who preached in 1892 that

> the new conception of the constant pressure and action of ultimate energy in nature which the doctrine of evolution suggests [was] far grander than the notion that the full-grown system of things is the immediate product of initial *fiat* which called them into being, gave them laws, and then left them to run their appointed course … [Evolution had made] the doctrine of the Divine Presence a new reality in religion, and a new inspiration for the soul.[37]

Spence did believe, however, in intervention to improve the environment that was so critical to the formation of human character, and to reduce the power of heredity to affect people's lives for the worse. She regarded poverty as capable of being transmitted from generation to generation, but saw it as possible to take action to liberate children from the effects of this "hereditary taint." What was needed was not the traditional treatment offered by "the poor fare, the narrow limitations, the low associations of the English

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[35] [C.H. Spence], "Life, Health, and Climate," Register, 4 October 1878, 6.

[36] Catherine Helen Spence, "Heredity and Environment" (1897), repr. *Catherine Helen Spence*, ed. Helen Thomson, 510.

[37] A Sermon, Hobart, 10 January 1892, quoted in Walter W. Phillips, "Religious Response to Darwin in Australia in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Australian Studies* 26, no. May (1990): 51.

workhouse and the American poorhouse" for these were unlikely "to give the vitality that these poor children need …" but, rather, the removal of children from pauper homes and from the Destitute Asylum. To this end she worked with Emily Clark who campaigned strongly for the reform of the relevant legislation affecting the Destitute Society and established the Boarding Out Society in South Australia. As Susan Magarey notes, Clark had been influenced by Frances Power Cobbe's attack on the British Poor Laws in which she argued that "every dependent child ought to be separated and removed as far as by any means may be possible from pauper moral influences and pauper physical and social degradation."[38] Spence's confidence in the effectiveness of the Boarding Out system, in which the children of "pauper" families were placed with "respectable" families who received an allowance for boarding them, is reflected in *Handfasted*. In comparing the conditions of neglected or deserted children in workhouses in England with their treatment in Scotland, Hugh Keith articulates Spence's own views:

> We cannot tell what might come of them if they were separated from the depressing and demoralising companionship of their fellows. We know that the surroundings here are stifling to ambition. The parish children in Scotland are all boarded out with respectable poor people and show no marked deficiency in intellect or morals. We are all too apt to attach too much to heredity (333).

Heredity, to Spence, was a powerful but not necessarily negative or overwhelming force in the formation of character. In a paper delivered to the Criminological Society of South Australia in 1897, she argued that "heredity, though an enormous factor in our constitution, need not be regarded as an over-mastering fate, for each human being has an almost limitless parentage to draw on … and it depends greatly on the environment which of the hereditary traits will take persistent hold on the character."[39] Like those earlier reformers, J.D. Lang and W.C. Wentworth, who tried to differentiate between convicts and "Australians" by regarding succeeding generations in New South Wales and Tasmania, as "destined … to take a high place, both in morals and in everything else, in

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[38] *The Philosophy of the Poor Laws*, 1864, quoted in Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 94. See Magarey pp. 93-102 for a discussion of these instititutions and Spence's involvement with them.

For more on Spence's opinions on Frances Power Cobbe, see p. 182.

[39] Spence, "Heredity and Environment", 512.

the great family of nations," [40] Spence regarded environmental influences as significant, contributing much to the progress of human beings and society. She noted that "besides drawing on a much wider ancestry than the immediate parents, we have more than we inherit, or where could the law of progress come in? Each generation, each child who is born, comes into a slightly different world, fed more experience, blown upon by fresh influences."[41] She uses Comte's idea that progress was not an assumption or an ideology but a law to discredit the naturalist writers of the late nineteenth century such as Émile Zola and Henrik Ibsen, whom she felt "ride heredity to death [implying that] we inherit only the vices, the weaknesses and the diseases of our ancestors. If this is really the case the world would become worse and worse in each succeeding generation."[42] Like Robert Owen and so many who went before her, Spence's faith in the malleability of human beings who only needed the right environment to bring out their best qualities was central to her belief in the possibility of the continual progress of humankind.

Spence's address to the Criminological Society reflects her concern with criminal reform as an important part of broader social reform. Influenced by early sociological studies by researchers such as Richard Dugdale and Oscar McCulloch in America, she argued that changing the environment of the criminal or potential criminal was the best hope for reducing crime and that as society progressed, violent crime would decrease. The "gradual softening and rationalising of the penal laws," prison reform, human sympathy, punishment that is "disciplinary and not revengeful," and treatment that offered hope to the offender could all play a part in transforming criminal tendencies.[43] So, too, could the removal of children from criminal influences to "decent homes … giving them as companions at school and church, at work and at play, the children of industrious and law-abiding citizens."[44] In a similar vein to the prejudice she shows toward the

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[40] White, *Inventing Australia*, 27.

[41] Spence, "Heredity and Environment", 513.

[42] Ibid., 511.

[43] Ibid., 510; Catherine Helen Spence, *State Children in Australia: A History of Boarding out and Its Developments* (Adelaide: Vardon and Sons Limited, 1907), 10.

[44] Spence, "Heredity and Environment", 515-6.

"undeserving poor," she also distinguishes between the "criminal class" and those who commit white-collar crimes during times of prosperity: "these are not committed by the criminal class at all," she notes, the "criminal element" being identified as a subgroup of the population who were unlikely to change.[45] These "respectable" criminals "are mainly confined to the greatly tempted among lawyers, bankers, trustees, Church members, all of whom know perfectly well the ethical wrong of these acts."[46] The solution to this particular type of crime lies not in punishment for the embezzler but, as Richard Dugdale suggested, "more effective auditing …"[47] It seems progress – in this case, economic progress – carries with it some social costs, with the implication being that the middle-class speculator is not really a criminal and, therefore, the cost is only to be borne temporarily.

Spence's attitude to class in relation to crime is surprising in some respects, considering her attraction to some of the new and radical ideas about class that were becoming increasingly popular in Australia, as discussed later in this chapter. It was, however, not so much class *per se* that she saw as the determinant of virtue or vice as the desire for respectability or its absence. Being working class was not seen by Spence as likely to lead to crime by itself, for she often valorises manual labour in her writing, but she does place considerable blame on the working class individual who is unemployed for reasons such as laziness, drunkenness or gambling. Given her enthusiasm for the notion of environment as an influence on character, one would expect her to show a little sympathy towards the view reflected in William Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise* of the working class as exploited and brutalised by the capitalist system. But Spence was no labour radical, and some British Victorian attitudes, such as that expressed by George Eliot about the "hideous margin of society" which "at one edge [drew] towards it the undesigning ignorant poor, at the other darken[ed] imperceptibly into the lowest criminal

[45] Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1860-1900: Glad, Confident Morning*, vol. 3 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 168; Spence, "Heredity and Environment", 520.

[46] Spence, "Heredity and Environment", 520.

[47] Quoted in Spence, "Heredity and Environment."

class," remained entrenched.[48] Thus the movements in Australia in the late nineteenth century which tended to question middle-class capitalist hegemony, such as the formation of trade unions, the popularity of socialism and the utopianism expressed in books such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, as well as the effects of the depression of the early 1890s, left her opinions unchanged in relation to the morality of the middle class *versus* that of the so-called criminal class.[49] The trend towards secularism that operated to reduce the power in Australia of the Church of England, an institution which "encouraged general acceptance of class distinctions and privilege,"[50] had little effect on the Victorian ideology that connected class and character for Spence either, with the small number and middle-class nature of Adelaide Unitarians more likely to preserve the *status quo* in this respect. This ideology made it necessary for that element of the working class who inhabited the "Nether Regions" of Victorian society – "the criminal classes, paupers, beggars and the work-shy" – to be "hidden and controlled," as Leonore Davidoff argues.[51] Thus Spence is harsh in her judgment of those she deems to be in this category, as discussed in chapter four, even recommending flogging for those responsible for "brutal assaults on women and children"; "[t]here can be no doubt," she writes, "that the swift, sharp, humbling punishment of flogging would have great influence on … effective public opinion …."[52]

Nevertheless, while many had come to the conclusion by the end of the nineteenth century that crime was not likely to be "eliminated by deterrence, transformation of individuals or reform of the social system,"[53] Spence remained optimistic. Ultimately

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[48] Eliot, "Address to Working Men", 346.

[49] Spence's engagement with these movements is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For discussion and analysis of late nineteenth-century radicalism in Australia, see Bruce Scates, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[50] Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand*, 134.

[51] Leonore Davidoff, "Class and Gender in Victorian England", in *Sex and Class in Women's History: Essays from Feminist Studies*, ed. Judith Newton, Mary P. Ryan, and Judith Walkowitz (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 19.

[52] For more on Spence's attitudes towards the "morally unfit," see p.189.

"Marriage Rights and Wrongs," *Register*, 15 July 1878, repr. Thomson, ed., *Catherine Helen Spence*, 500.

[53] Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1860-1900: Glad, Confident Morning*, 168.

there would be no criminal class in her good society because most of the causes of crime, particularly those related to the temptation to live an easier life, as well as poverty, would have been eliminated. Utopian fiction gave Spence the opportunity to project her ideas about reducing crime into the future and imagine what this new crime-free world would look like. In *A Week in the Future*, she speculates about the scientific advances that have taken place between 1888 and 1988 enabling improvements in crime detection, with the result that the less intelligent criminals are caught and reformed "by being taught an honest calling" (82). Smarter and more devious criminals are less easily dealt with. Only through providing children with training and education which "draw[s] out the higher and … repress[es] the lower nature" can "moral idiots be reduced in number" (83). The causes of crime such as drunkenness, gambling, laziness and poverty have been removed by offering instead the certainty of "the rewards of honest industry" (83); for Spence, the Protestant work ethic is central to the achievement of utopia, as noted in previous chapters. It resembles Robert Owen's philosophy of solving the problems caused by poverty through enabling the poor to become independent and self-supporting, but it also provides the means by which the poor can be better managed.[54] Such is the case in *Handfasted's* Columba, too. In fact, Columba has no prisons at all – offenders have to work on the roads or work for the neighbour whom they have wronged. Even murderers are treated relatively leniently, particularly those who commit crimes of passion; as Liliard says, "Gilbert Elliott's father had a near miss of murder, but the man got better and forgave him. It was sudden passion that led him on, so he had only to work on the roads for two years" (139).

Unlike the consistent story Spence tells of the organic relationship between social progress and the elimination of poverty and crime, her utopias give us conflicting pictures of how she perceived the relationship between social progress and race, a relationship that was of particular significance in Australia. Social-Darwinist theories and ideas about the connection between physical appearance and character, such as phrenology, together with the power of British imperialism, had helped convince many white Australians of the

[54] See Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America*, ch.1&2.

superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and the inferiority of any other race.[55] Such was the basis of the so-called "national type" which became popular towards the end of the nineteenth century. This concept embraced the racial characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon and therefore British people, but it also became entangled in nationalist sentiment, as Richard White observes, making the "Australian type" both a symbol of British imperialism and Australian achievement.[56] Thus Australians were able to agree with the rhetoric of Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for Colonies and "archetypal imperialist," when he declared the Anglo-Saxon race, "so proud, so tenacious, self-confident and determined, this race which neither climate nor change can degenerate, which will infallibly be the predominant force of future history and universal civilization."[57]

Spence appears to have accepted some of this hyperbole and rejected other parts. In *Handfasted*, for example, Hugh Keith shares Chamberlain's assessment that white-skinned people were able to work anywhere, which actually went against the commonly-held assumption that whites were unable to work in the tropics.[58] Keith argues instead that what stops them is "the presence of a numerous inferior race who are glad to work for low wages" in such places as India and America's South. He points out that in Columba there are no black servants and the indigenous people "were not the sort of people to be enslaved; the difficulty with them was to induce them to work at all" (92). The prejudice evident in Spence's characterisation of the indigenous Central American Indians, black Americans and the Indian working class is not unusual for the time,

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[55] For discussions of nineteenth-century racism in Australia and its cultural representation, see, for example, Meaney, "'The Yellow Peril'"; Janeen Webb and Andrew Enstice, *Aliens and Savages: Fiction, Politics and Prejudices in Australia* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1998); White, *Inventing Australia*, ch.5.

[56] White, *Inventing Australia*, 65.

[57] Ibid., 71.

[58] According to Alison Bashford, "there was a long tradition in British imperial science and medicine suggesting that whites could not thrive in tropical climates, that permanent and successful white settlement was simply not physically or 'racially' possible."Alison Bashford, "Race and Place: Whiteness in Australian History," *The Drawing Board* (2002). See also Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), ch.3.

reflecting as it does mainstream attitudes towards those from other (non-Western) cultures.

Yet there is no fear of miscegentation; the mixing of Scottish and Indian races in Columba has produced a healthy, generally happy population who work hard and possess few of the vices so prevalent in the outside world. In *Handfasted*, Spence appears to advocate the construction of a society that absorbs the best of all worlds and offers a pragmatic solution to the fraternisation that was inevitable between the white male settlers and indigenous women given the shortage of women settlers. Unlike William Lane, who prohibited his real-life settlers in Paraguay from crossing the "Colour Line," Spence seems to accept with equanimity the notion of inter-racial marriage and breeding.[59] She also raises doubts in *Handfasted* about the rightness of imperialism. After describing the early battles between the settlers and the Indians, Marguerite writes in her diary that "Mr Abercrombie proposed exterminating them [the Indians] as the only course, but Victor [her son] and I had some misgivings as to whether we had done right in coming to this peaceful valley to take their land from them" (195-6). Eventually a truce is made and the mixture of races becomes a positive aspect of this hidden utopia.

Spence never discusses miscegenation in relation to Australia in any of her other writing, however, leaving room to speculate ab
out whether she perceived differences between Central American Indians and Australian Aborigines. Helen Thomson suggests that, based on two passages from Spence's *Clara Morison* which "comprise almost everything that Spence had to say about Aboriginal Australians … these people are clearly not of much interest to her, for they are simply outside that version of full humanity that belongs to the white race."[60] Janette Hancock, in a recent article, argues that Spence's "representation of the 'other' in stereotypical and

[59] Lane had his group of settlers sign a pledge to observe the "Colour Line." This meant, as Anne Whitehead notes, that membership of the New Australia Cooperative Settlement Association "was forbidden to 'any person of colour, including any married to a person of colour.' There was to be no racial fraternising." Anne Whitehead, *Paradise Mislaid: In Search of the Australian Tribe of Paraguay* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1997), 177.

[60] Thomson, "Enlightenment Woman", 240.

ignorant terms helped to enshrine racism in colonial Australia"; Spence's "foundational narratives became the medium through which she could uphold the colonial conviction that land rightfully belonged to 'civilisation' rather than to the 'savage' Aboriginal people."[61] Accusations of racism seem to be borne out by the fact that Spence draws the villains in *Handfasted* from the group of mixed-race men, suggesting, according to Helen Thomson, that they bear "the signs of their Indian ancestry not only in their darker skin, but also in their untrustworthiness, dishonesty and greed."[62] It appears to Thomson, therefore, that "the dark-skinned other is precluded by his or her difference from full membership in the emancipatory project for human improvement."[63] But the presence of the "good" characters such as Liliard, descended from one of the original settlers and an Indian woman, makes this conclusion an uncertain one, for Liliard is a positive representative of Columban society.

In an article that again mixes racism and humanitarianism, Spence argues the case against "blackbirding" by appealing to white British self-interest as a way of improving middle-class moral behaviour.[64] The Northern Territory was vulnerable to invasion, she wrote, because of its land being in the hands of absentee landlords. What was needed was development by "Australian hands and brains," that is, people who would have an interest in defending the territory in the event of "foreign invasion."[65] The problem with the exploitation of Pacific Islanders was that they were brought to work in the canefields, and then sent back

> spoilt for their own life, none the better, but generally the worse, for their apprenticeship … The desideratum is to settle workers on the land, to give them

[61] Hancock, "'Me, Myself and Others': A New Look at Catherine Helen Spence," 45.

[62] Thomson, "Enlightenment Woman", 241-2.

[63] Ibid., 242.

[64] Blackbirding involved the "recruitment" of cheap labourers from the Pacific Islands during the nineteenth century to work on cotton and sugar plantations in Queensland. For a detailed history of the practice, see Edward Wybergh Docker, *The Blackbirders: The Recruiting of South Seas Labour for Queensland, 1863-1907* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970).

[65] C.H. Spence, "Northern Territory. Its Development and Defence," *Register*, 15 December 1904.

> an interest in the country they develop, and to allow them to have their wives and children with them."[66]

Indian farmers would be ideal, she argued, because they "are of the same original Aryan stock as ourselves, and were civilized peoples when our ancestors were naked barbarians." They should not be imported as "cheap servants" as others had suggested, but as farmers with tenure in the land.

An examination of a broader range of Spence's writing and opinions, however, reveals a possible counter-discourse to dominant ideologies about race. She rejects the idea of Britain as the epitome of civilisation, for example, allowing that there might be very good reasons for other countries to have different views. She agreed that the Chinese people had a valid reason for resenting the introduction by the British of opium to China, referring to this action as "imperious and unscrupulous knocking at the closed ports of China with a pernicious drug for the benefit of British and Anglo-Indian traders and cultivators."[67] She also suggested the opinions of the Chinese Ambassador to England, Liu-ta-jen, whose diary extracts had been recently published in the *Nineteenth Century*, were similar to views expressed by English writers such as John Ruskin: "the reader will see that the Celestial in London is at one with Mr Ruskin, and with many other noble Englishmen, in protesting against the exclusive pursuit of money-making contrivances and the restlessness of what is called a practical age."[68] Arguing for better understanding on both sides, she observes that

> there has been good reason given for the suspiciousness of the Celestial Empire as to British commercial greed and aggressiveness, and also for complaint that when we had forced our way for our own purposes into China, we did not welcome Chinese who peacefully made their way for their own purposes into our settlements … It will be well for both nationalities to become better acquainted with each other …[69]

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[66] Ibid.

[67] SPES [pseudonym of C.H. Spence], Review of "The Conflicts of Capital and Labour," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 1879.

[68] [C.H. Spence], "A Chinese View of English Characteristics," *Observer*, 1 January 1881.

[69] Ibid.

Furthermore, Spence came to reconsider her early lack of awareness of the problematic position of black minorities in a nation dominated by whites. After meeting with Harriet Tubman, the black American abolitionist who had helped free 300 slaves in America's South, and with William Lloyd Garrison, the son of a vocal white abolitionist, during her overseas trip in 1893-4, she admitted to "being a little ashamed of being so narrow in my views on the coloured question."[70] Garrison, as recorded in her autobiography, was "animated with the spirit of the true brotherhood of man, was an advocate of the heathen Chinee [sic], and was continually speaking of the goodness of the negro and coloured and yellow races, and of the injustice and rapacity of the white Caucasians."[71] The work of Booker T. Washington in America in trying to raise up the ex-slaves and inculcate a "strong sense of personal responsibility" was the kind of work she tried to do herself, although the language that she uses to describe slaves is often patronising and racist. In an article on Washington, for example, she writes of the abolitionists taking up "an unpopular cause on behalf of an oppressed, feeble, and ignorant race," while she describes slaves as "mostly liars – lies are the only weapon of a child … [and] they were often thieves …."[72] Nevertheless, she seems to appreciate some of the negative effects of slavery when she speaks of the "hindrances to moral development" caused "when governments are unjust and tyrannical and above all where slavery and serfdom exist …" and of "the struggles … on the part of both races to free themselves from old, deep-seated prejudice …"[73] However, as Susan Magarey observes, "she seems not to have thought of bringing her broadened views to any consideration of racial dispossession and exploitation at home in South Australia."[74]

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[70] Spence, *Autobiography*, 73.

[71] Ibid.

[72] C.H. Spence, "Booker Washington and the Negro Problem," *Register*, 2 April 1904; Spence, Sermon, "Human Responsibility," [n.d], SLSA Archives.

[73] Spence, "Human Responsibility"; Spence, "Booker Washington and the Negro Problem."

[74] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 166-7.

In recognising that racial prejudice could retard both moral and social development, Spence set herself apart from many whites in late nineteenth-century Australia. While at times she used racist language and expressed racist opinions, she often expressed views that were considerably at odds with majority opinions about race. The widespread concern in Australia towards the end of the century about the possibility of an "Asian invasion" and the belief in white Anglo-Saxon superiority contributed to the public debate about the "national type," as noted on page 17. At the heart of this discussion lay concerns about the future of the "race," that is, the white race in Australia. Writers such as J.F. Archibald in the *Bulletin* and William Lane defined Australians on a racial basis, with Lane claiming in *The Boomerang* that "Australia is not a sect or a section, it is not a caste or a class, or a creed, is not to be a Southern England nor yet another United States. Australia is the whole white people of this great continent."[75] Similarly, Archibald and James Edmond of the *Bulletin* wanted

> "'Australia for the Australians!' … By the term Australian we mean not those who have been merely born in Australia. We mean … all white men who come to these shores - with a clean record - and who leave behind them the memory of the class-distinctions and the religious differences of the old world …."[76]

Even a relatively enlightened commentator such as Francis Adams, who scorned the blatant racism of some journalists, was a "Chinese prohibitionist," on the grounds that "the Chinese are a race who cannot amalgamate with our own."[77] Spence also saw difficulties with Chinese settlement in Australia because their religion "prevents [it], even if it were desirable, for they all want to die – or, at any rate, to be buried – in China."[78] Adams goes on to say that "the Chinese must go because they can beat us in the struggle for existence," implying that in the struggle for the survival of the fittest, the "Aryan" might lose. He also provocatively suggests, as Meg Tasker observes, "that Chinese civilisation is more fully evolved, and more socially just, than the unholy system of 'competition' being established in the western world," echoing Catherine Spence's

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[75] *The Boomerang*, 19 November 1887, quoted in Wilding, "Introduction", 32.

[76] *Bulletin*, 2 July 1887, quoted in Sylvia Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox: A Strange Case of Authorship* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1987), 130.

[77] Francis Adams, "What the Chinese Can Teach Us," *The Boomerang*, 11 February 1888, 10.

[78] C.H. Spence, "Northern Territory. Its Development and Defence."

condemnation of British "greed and aggressiveness."[79] Spence did not go so far as to suggest that China was superior to the west but she did question some of the grounds on which the west could claim superiority, again presenting a critique of existing society.

For Spence, social evolution was far more complicated than many Social Darwinists suggested. She is occasionally at one with the concerns and prejudices of her times, particularly in relation to the debate about overpopulation and the effect of the "unfit" on future generations. *A Week in the Future*, for example, presents what Spence perceived as possible solutions to these issues: the "preventive check" to control the number of children coming into the world and improvements in education and science that would positively affect the physical and moral character of human beings. These appear to locate her in the same Australian middle class which was anxious about the progress of Australia, and for whom "the rise of the labour movement, the continuing desire to dispossess indigenous peoples, mass immigration with its attendant spectre of racial mixing, … the phobia about Asian invasion, increasing crime and poverty … all played a part in undermining middle-class confidence."[80] But despite taking on board in *A Week in the Future* theories of Jane Clapperton's that tried to address some of the concerns about the future of the British race, Spence's other writing reveals a more thoughtful and complex intellect at work on the idea of social progress.

Spence demonstrated a modern sensibility, more in keeping with first-wave feminists such as Rose Scott than with mainstream British and Australian opinion, on another issue as well. Reflecting on the cost of war in both social and economic terms in *A Week in the Future*, she wrote of it as a "barbarous practice" which had vanished over the last hundred years (22). Its elimination was largely due to the fact that "engines were devised and constructed so destructive that human nature recoiled from them in horror," with the

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[79] Meg Tasker, *"Struggle and Storm": The Life and Death of Francis Adams* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 93.

[80] Stephen Garton, "Writing Eugenics: A History of Classifying Practices", in *A Race for a Place: Eugenics, Darwinism and Social Thought and Practice in Australia*, ed. Martin Crotty, John Germov, and Grant Rodwell (Callaghan, NSW: Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University of Newcastle, 2000), 12.

result that arbitration replaced war (104). Armies previously required to be trained in skills that were unproductive, as well as the cost of maintaining standing armies of artillery and fortifications, were now available to contribute to the general well-being, while the elimination of the fear of war "which was worse than the conflict itself" contributed to an increased level of happiness in 1988 England (54-5). Although some pain had to be borne with the demobilisation of so many in the armed forces and their sudden arrival onto the employment market, there is no doubt in the minds of the inhabitants of the future or the visitor from the past that this was progress. In writing this four years after the war in the Sudan, Spence was questioning the widespread acceptance of the assumption in nineteenth-century Australia that "military superiority was … the ultimate measure of national fitness [and] by far the greatest, most glorious test was war."[81] She expressed similar sentiments about the Boer War (1899-1901), decrying the intolerance that accompanied the fervour for battle and the unjustified nature of this particular war. Her dislike of British imperialism and aggression is again apparent, as is her dismay at Australian attitudes; her autobiography reflects her disappointment:

> We are apt to pride ourselves on the advance we have made in our civilization, but our self-glorification received a rude shock at the feelings of intolerance and race hatred that the war brought forth. Freedom of speech became the monopoly of those who supported the war ….[82]

Reflecting the unhappiness they felt about the war, and unable to "face the almost ribald excesses of that day," Scott, Spence and Jeanne Young, Spence's friend and biographer, spent Mafeking Day in 1901 in Scott's Sydney home, with all of them feeling "the black hand of death and desolation."[83]

Spence's dislike of war did not appear to be rooted in the same feminist critique as Rose Scott's pacifism, but rather in her concern with the waste in terms of human lives and money. It perhaps more closely resembled the views of Maybanke Anderson, another notable Australian feminist, who attacked a speech by Major-General Hutton about war

[81] White, *Inventing Australia*, 72.

[82] Spence, *Autobiography*, 86.

[83] Ibid.

and asked if "progress was a phantom?" that he should expect women "to train a generation of our boys to look on human life as a trifle, to be sacrificed without regret if tyranny should demand it, as men did in centuries that are gone."[84] Scott's association of national rivalry with the dominance of men over women was also different from the anti-war stance of the South African feminist Olive Schreiner, whose sympathy for the Boers was racially-based, according to Paula Krebs; Schreiner saw the blending of Boers and Britons as the future of "the united British colony of South Africa," "a nation of one white race in a land of many African races."[85] Henrietta Dugdale had a similar view to Spence about the barbaric and wasteful nature of war, describing it in scathing terms in her 1883 utopia, *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age*, but she regards it, as she does most of the old society's faults, as the result of masculine failings. The "Conquering Heroes" represented in the museum's display of the fifteenth to twenty-first centuries "are cruelly illusing [sic] every living being, even women and children," with most atrocities in this "Christian Era" – also known as "the Age of Blood and Malevolence," "committed under the cloak of religion."[86] Dugdale depicts the costs of war in terms of dead and dying human beings and horses, and emphasises its pointlessness. The utopian guide sympathises with her children's horror as they observe these museum exhibits, calling them "a most shocking and pitiable sight … So great were their [the leaders'] vanity and ignorance of noble ideas that they made loud boasts of their 'victories' – so those murders were called – and myth-men in their churches thanked their God for them."[87]

Spence had support for her anti-war stance among women, but she had a powerful ally within the Australian press in the form of J.F. Archibald, who also disapproved of the war against the Boer. Indeed, after a sermon Spence gave in Sydney in 1900 in which she spoke about international peace, the *Bulletin* referred to her as "the gallant little old lady who had more moral courage in her little finger than all the Sydney ministers had in their

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[84] *Woman's Voice*, 1894, quoted in Roberts, *Maybanke Anderson: Sex, Suffrage and Social Reform*, 168.

[85] Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 109, 111.

[86] Dugdale, *A Few Hours in a Far-Off Age*, 89.

[87] Ibid., 89-90.

combined anatomies."[88] Archibald's arguments against war were more grounded in an ideology of masculinism and radical Anglo-phobia than in pacifism, however. He wanted Australians to fight Australian battles, and was outraged on behalf of the underdog Boers.[89] In any case, he castigated mainstream newspapers such as the *Herald*, the *Telegraph* and the *Age* for their role as "the Jingo press."[90] Broadly speaking, however, it was a time when minority opinions such as "pacifism, conscientious objection or pro-Boer sympathies quickly became synonymous with anti-British sentiments," as Beverley Kingston notes.[91] It would be interesting to know what Spence might have written if she still had the same level of access to the leader columns of the press that she had had twenty years earlier, but it seems clear that war and the jingoism that accompanied it were not a part of her vision of the good society and, in fact, represented the opposite of progress.

Majority opinion, such as that which dominated public discourse on the Boer War, was an aspect of nineteenth-century political life which Spence argued worked against progress. She saw political progress requiring change to the electoral system and campaigned strongly against what she saw as the shortcomings of democracy as it operated in countries such as Australia, America and Britain and for a system that included proportional representation. She dreamed of South Australia showing the way to the other Australian colonies and to the rest of the world through the implementation of an electoral system that ensured all interests were represented in government, not just those of the majority. The system that then operated in South Australia was very different from that of the twentieth century. Mid-nineteenth-century elections were decided by majority

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[88] *Bulletin*, 26 May 1900, p. 7.

[89] Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox*, 210. There were other reasons for anti-war positions by men, such as the radical British journalist, W.T. Stead's, assertions about the rape of Boer women by British soldiers, which he argued led to a lowering of the moral standards of the British nation. See Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War*, ch.4.

[90] Quoted in Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox*, 184. It is not clear if Archibald's interpretation of the word "jingo" coincided with its meanings in England at this time. As Paula Krebs observes, jingo did not mean patriotic in its use in relation to the British press; rather it was "a class-inflected concept" and "grumblings about jingoism were coded complaints about the likes of the *Daily Mail*'s pandering to the working classes" (10).

[91] Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1860-1900: Glad, Confident Morning*, 307.

vote in small districts with no preferential voting and limited male suffrage. As discussed in Chapter Three, Spence was not in favour of female suffrage at that time, but she did want those who had a vote and who did not necessarily hold majority opinions, to have some influence on the way the colony was run. Political equality for Spence meant "that every man's vote shall have its weight, wherever he may live, and whatever majority or minority he may belong to. It is by the enfranchisement of minorities alone that we can arrive at the true state of public opinion."[92] It was the United States' great misfortune, according to Spence, that the words of its founders had not truly been put into practice because only through the inclusion of minority views could real equality be achieved. In one regard, her desire for the inclusion of minority views was élitist, as noted in Chapter One, but she explicitly wanted to avoid decisions being made on the basis of populism, arguing that "numbers do not secure the preponderance of wisdom in the counsels of the nation."[93] Spence's focus on the negative aspects of majority rule and America's political problems bear some similarities to the views of Alexis de Tocqueville. While she placed less emphasis than Tocqueville on the "middling standard" of culture that he felt accompanied democracy, they shared a similar distrust of the "tyranny of the majority." The intolerance of minority opinions that the Boer War produced in Australia was an example of this, demonstrating what Tocqueville had observed of America, that "the majority has enclosed thought within a formidable fence. A writer is free inside that area, but woe to the man who goes beyond it … [H]e must face all kinds of unpleasantness and everyday persecution."[94]

Individualism was a key element in Spence's support for a new form of democracy. She argued that "the rule of the mob may be as tyrannical as that of the priestly caste, or crowned despot or privileged oligarchy, and it might be more stifling to original thought and independence of mind than that of any of the three."[95] Her comment about the power

[92] Spence, *A Plea for Pure Democracy*, 7.

[93] C.H. Spence, A Colonist of 1839, "The Democratic Ideal – III.".

[94] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* J.P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 255.

[95] Spence, "The Democratic Ideal – III."

of the majority to stifle originality has much in common with John Stuart Mill's assertion that "in politics it is almost a triviality to say that public opinion now rules the world," a situation that had led to mediocrity prevailing over genius.[96] For both Mill and Spence, politics was just one area of life to which the general principle of the importance of the individual in the progress of society applied, although both argued for limitations on the right of the individual to pursue their own happiness. Mill, for example, specified that an "individual's conduct must not injure the interests of another" and that "each individual had to bear his share of the labours and sacrifices incurred for defending society or its members from injury and molestation."[97] Spence regarded the expression of an individual's ideas without "malice" or "discourtesy" and behaviour that does not "interfer[e] with the liberty of others" as criteria for differentiating between individuality and selfishness.[98] In *A Week in the Future*, she creates a society whose basis is the "intelligent pursuit of happiness," with society's disapproval of encroachment on the rights of others and injury to the feelings of others a sufficient restraint on transgressions (68-9).

Between 1861, when she wrote the pamphlet on proportional representation, and 1894, Spence's views on the role of politics in the development of society altered to reflect an increasingly radical position. This was indicated by her staunch support for female suffrage in the early 1890s, but it was also evident in her strong criticism of the American political system. In an article published after her visit to America in 1893-4, she wrote scathingly of the power of party machines to suffocate any attempts at reform in the United States and of the effects of the basic conservatism of the two main political parties and the American voter:

> so far as I can ascertain, both the Republicans and the Democrats proclaim themselves the party of progress when they are out of power, but no sooner have they gained the ascendancy than they become the party of standing still or of reaction … there is not a grain of reform in either of the old parties. The reform

[96] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" (1859), ed. Mary Warnock (Glasgow: Fount, 1979), 195.

[97] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 92-3.

[98] A Colonist of 1839, "Individuality," *Register*, 24 February 1879.

> fire and energy is in the outside parties which are extinguished at the polls by the political machine.[99]

In this same article, she denounces the domination of both the United States House of Representatives and the Senate by lawyers as "obstructive to all reform," observing that "the second or third rate lawyers, to whom a political career is tempting, are somewhat hidebound and technical, and America needs radical reforms."[100] She castigated American citizens for their willingness to place their liberty in peril, noting not only the effect of party machines, but the monopoly power of American corporations over public utilities, and the consequent influence of the wealthy who controlled these corporations. Paraphrasing the Irish lawyer and orator, John Philpot Curran, she wrote that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, but it must be carried out by the citizen. Eternal vigilance on the part of the political machine only is eternal slavery for the citizen. And the sleepless machine cannot be moralized by bursts of righteous wrath, followed by periods of supine indifference."[101] There is no available evidence of responses in the American or the Australian press to such stinging criticism but it does indicate just how far she had moved from her relatively moderate position of 1861.

Spence's radical critique of contemporary politics in the United States in the 1890s also reflected some of the changes which had been taking place in South Australian politics in the late nineteenth century and in Australia more generally.[102] The rise of trade unionism that Robin Gollan attributes to the increasing self-consciousness of the working class of itself as a class and the awareness of socialist ideas as articulated by writers such as

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[99] Catherine Helen Spence, "An Australian's Impressions of America," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 89 (1894): 250.

[100] Ibid.: 249.

[101] Ibid.: 251.

[102] A number of historians have described the rise of the labour movement and socialism during this period in Australia and the establishment of labour parties in the various colonies in the 1890s. See, for example, Verity Burgmann, *'In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor 1885-1905* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1985); Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia 1850-1910* (Carlton: Halstead Press, 1967); David Lovell, *Marxism and Australian Socialism before the Bolshevik Revolution* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1997); Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism and Nationalism* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1986); Scates, *A New Australia*.

Edward Bellamy, William Morris, Lawrence Grönlund and Henry George helped to politicise the working class.[103] Although it is possible to argue, as Humphrey McQueen does, that the labour movement lacked class consciousness, that Australian socialism "very often meant nothing other than state intervention to aid capitalism,"[104] the spread of ideas associated with these movements helped to foster an oppositional culture that largely rejected the *status quo*. In South Australia, as Susan Magarey observes, the so-called Reform Movement, with its loose collection of small interest groups, approved of and promoted a range of reforms such as single tax, land nationalisation, distribution of wealth and labour justice which also contributed to an atmosphere of radicalism.[105] Spence was sympathetic to some of these reform ideas including Henry George's land tax and the village settlements along the Murray River, and she did depict some socialist practices in *A Week in the Future* which showed the influence not just of Jane Clapperton, but of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* as well.

Spence's depiction of the transition to utopia in *A Week in the Future* more closely resembles the path to Bellamy's future society in *Looking Backward*, too, than the violent methods imagined by a number of the late nineteenth-century Australian utopian writers. No violent revolution has been necessary in the achievement of Spence's twentieth-century utopia and, as Lesley Ljungdahl puts it, "radical social changes are accepted without question [and] the vicissitudes in the course of reform have been overcome."[106] Spence's revolution has more in common with Fabian socialist ideas of social change, than with those of Marx and Engels, so that many of the descriptions by George Bernard Shaw, Annie Besant and Beatrice and Sydney Webb about the gradualist methods of

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[103] Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, 104.

The most influential works were Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000 - 1887* (1888), ed. (New York: Modern Library, 1951); Laurence Grönlund, *The Co-Operative Commonwealth in Its Outlines: An Exposition of Modern Socialism* (1884); Morris, *News from Nowhere*.

For a discussion of the reading habits of the Australian working class, see Scates, *A New Australia*, ch.2.

[104] McQueen, *A New Britannia*, 203.

[105] Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 123.

[106] Ljungdahl, Prologue, 12.

Fabian socialism could have been written by Spence.[107] By contrast, there is considerable violence before utopia is achieved in the novels of such writers as David Andrade, a Melbourne anarchist, and Samuel Rosa, an Australian-born socialist who was educated in London. Their heroes become involved in the violent overthrow of the old system in spite of the fact that both of the authors appeared to eschew violence themselves with Rosa writing in the preface to *The Coming Terror* (1894) that "the shedding of blood and the destruction of human life is as abhorrent to him [sic] as it is to the most humane philanthropist." What Rosa desired was that "the inevitable change from capitalism to collectivism [would be] facilitated by the peaceful action of an enlightened populace voting at the polls."[108] Nevertheless, both Andrade and Rosa perceived social and political progress in Australia occurring only after bloody battles with the existing order. Like William Lane, they were writing in the 1890s, a time of great disappointment among radicals caused by the depression, the failure of the great strikes of the maritime workers and shearers to increase the well-being of the working class, and disappointment with labour parties.[109] They were also affected by the apocalyptic mood of the American writer, Ignatius Donnelly's dystopian novel, *Caesar's Column* (1890), which saw "widespread carnage as necessary before a new liberal pattern could emerge."[110]

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[107] See Leonard Woolf, "The Early Fabians and British Socialism", in *Shaw and Society: An Anthology and a Symposium*, ed. C.E.M. Joad (London: Odhams Press, [n.d]), 43-5.

[108] Rosa, *The Coming Terror: A Romance of the Twentieth Century*, Preface. Andrade's novel has the impressively long title of *The Melbourne Riots and How Harry Holdfast and his Friends Emancipated the Workers; A Realistic Novel.* Published in Melbourne by Andrade and Co., 1892. For a discussion of Australian utopian and dystopian novels written during the 1890s, see Albinski, "A Survey of Australian Utopian and Dystopian Fiction."; Nan Bowman Albinski, "Visions of the Nineties," *Journal of Australian Studies* 20 (1987).

[109] For discussions of Australian politics and radicalism in the 1890s, see, for example, Burgmann, *In Our Time;* John Docker, "Can the Centre Hold? Conceptions of the State 1890-1925", in *What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australian History*, ed. Sydney Labour History Group (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1982); Docker, *The Nervous Nineties;* Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics;* McQueen, *A New Britannia;* Scates, *A New Australia*.

[110] Joseph Jones, *Radical Cousins: Nineteenth-Century American and Australian Writers* (St Lucia: University of Queeensland Press, 1976), 37. For an understanding of the influence of *Caesar's Column* on Australian utopianism, see Docker, *The Nervous Nineties*, ch.9; Robin Gollan, "American Populism and Australian Utopianism," *Australian Journal for the Study of Labour History* 9 (1965).

In spite of her relatively conservative stance in relation to political change, Spence could, in fact, be seen as a part of an "alternative kind of socialist tradition" than the Marxist tradition, which Bruce Scates argues has been privileged over any other: "'[r]eal' socialism … was seen as 'revolutionary, scientific, anti-bourgeois and anti-liberal.'"[111] The model that Scates presents incorporates dimensions of class, gender and race that remained incomplete in this "old Left" version of socialism. What should be included according to Scates is the extent to which these alternative socialists "launched a critique of nineteenth-century society, questioning the authority of patriarchy and capitalism, the crown and the state."[112] Spence's attitudes to race have already been discussed both here and elsewhere and, although they are complicated, they repeat the silence of other Australian radicals about the dispossession of Australian Aborigines in their insistence on Australia being a new land. On other aspects of nineteenth-century society, however, Spence's critique is evident everywhere in her writing to a greater or lesser degree, while her support for women's rights was also manifested early on, becoming broader and more radical from the 1890s onwards.[113] A number of the characters in her novels question the patriarchal rules that govern what kind of work women can do, as well as the lowly and subjugated position they are relegated to as wives and daughters. She decries the kind of greed and aggression that often accompanied unchecked capitalism and criticises the state for being too involved in areas that she feels should be handled by the community or individual, and for not being involved enough where she thinks the state should intervene. Only the crown managed to escape her sharp eye and pen, for she saw constitutional monarchy as a desirable system of government, and Queen Victoria as "the greatest constitutional sovereign ever known."[114] Spence's own political trajectory appears to have followed that of Australia as it evolved from the relatively conservative political structures and institutions of the 1850s to the more varied and fragmented, sometimes conservative, sometimes radical, politics of the 1890s. What was constant in Spence's

[111] Scates, *A New Australia*, 8.

[112] Ibid., 11.

[113] See chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis for details of the changes to Spence's support for feminism between the 1850s and 1890s.

[114] Sermon, "Queen Victoria [on her death]," 27 January 1901, SLSA Archives.

position was her belief that the future would bring progress and that democracy – her "pure democracy" – was the best way to achieve political progress.

Just as Spence fought for an amended version of democracy as her ideal, so she advocated a modified and softened form of capitalism as the way to achieve economic progress. In some ways, her philosophy derived from that of Adam Smith whose monumental work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), provided the answer to his earlier questions about the purpose of "all the toil and bustle of this world … the end of avarice and ambition …": for him it was all justified in "the welfare of the common man."[115] So, too, did Spence view self-interest and sympathy as the motivational forces in the economic behaviour of human beings, although Smith's faith in the power of self-interest and competition is only partially represented by Spence in *A Week in the Future*; in her eyes, enlightened self-interest and not competition is the way to the good society. There are echoes here of George Eliot's "Address to Working Men" in which she argues that "a society, a nation is held together by … the dependence of men on each other and the sense they have of a common interest in preventing injury."[116] Spence was not as confident as Smith that the "Invisible Hand" would result in a good society by itself; she believed in a moral order, like Eliot, that would "ameliorate the suffering caused by the non-moral conditions of life."[117] While she had faith in the "face to face relationships and voluntary groupings" and "distruste[ed] monolithic politico-economic institutions" like Smith,[118] she also valued acts of individual virtue. This, despite her utilitarian leanings in *A Week in the Future*, was evident in the emphasis she placed on altruism and individual duty, discussed in chapters one and four. She had seen the results of British and American capitalism and shied away from the extremes of

[115] Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), quoted in Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times, and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 66.

[116] Eliot, "Address to Working Men", 342.

[117] Paris, "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity", 421.

[118] Porter, *Enlightenment*, 203.

socialism. Australia's progress would be different, with moral guidance from those, like Spence, who could take the best from all that the world had to offer.[119]

Spence did see the benefits to civilisation that could accrue from British capitalism, writing in a letter to the editor of the *Register* in 1877 that

> the British merchant prefers to take large risks in hopes of large results … [and his] activity and impatience of a creeping policy is at the root of that vast commercial enterprise which has planted colonies, reclaimed wildernesses, girdled the earth with railways and telegraphs, covered the ocean with shipping, and has so wonderfully advanced civilization and comfort wherever it has penetrated.[120]

This early paean to British imperialism and capitalism altered over time to reflect her disapproval of great inequalities of wealth, such as that which existed in England. America, too, fell short of an economic system that promoted fairness and economic justice, leaving the worker with "a shortened life and nothing to show for it."[121] What she wanted was a more effective use of capital, which would replace its present "unwieldiness" and "the conservatism of the capitalist" with "new applications of machinery and the employment of new modes of doing business."[122] Ideally, capital would be transferred around the world to wherever it was needed and used to increase global productivity. In Spence's words, "as capital becomes abundant and cheap it will be poured out like water over the habitable globe, and it must then be directed in a twofold manner – to enhance the production of the limited area of cultivable land and to multiply ten or a hundred fold the efforts of each individual worker over the world."[123]

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[119] Spence's sermons include discussions of eastern religious traditions, so her ideas were not based exclusively on western moral and religious traditions. See, for example, her sermons entitled "The Soul of a People," 3 May and 28 June 1903, ML MSS; "Buddhism at its Best and its Worst," [n.d.], SAA and "The Ancient Wisdom," [n.d.], ML MSS on Taoism. Lesley Ljungdahl also refers to sermons by Spence that discuss Hinduism, Islam and Judaism but I have not read these.

[120] Letter from Pure Democracy [C.H. Spence], "Government by Party," *Register*, 3 October 1877.

[121] A Colonist of 1839, "The Democratic Ideal – I."

[122] [C.H. Spence], "The Transfer of Capital," *Register*, 17 April 1879.

[123] Ibid.

Like T.H. Green, one of the leading proponents of new liberalism in Britain, Spence viewed the relationship between capital and labour as one of mutual advantage, with the long-standing conflict between the two groups able to be overcome "with increasing knowledge and perfect liberty of action."[124] She praises the efforts of a French publishing firm in setting aside a portion of their profits for pensions for employees, suggesting that "it is not improbable that this promised gratuity will secure for this firm the best workmen, and will be an infallible preventive of strikes."[125] Progress for workers was not to be found in any "communistic" program such as the "Nationalism" proposed by Bellamy, with communism appearing in "the guise of the working man's friend," and socialism that involves "the nationalization of things, as in the Utopias of Bellamy and Grönlund and William Morris is not desirable even if it were practicable." [126] Even in *A Week in the Future*, which was strongly influenced by Jane Clapperton's brand of socialism, the agricultural workers own a share in the farms they work on, with the result that everyone feels some pride of ownership:

> They handled the costly machines with an owner's pride and intelligent care. They watched that there should be no waste to take from their gains. The fruit trees were their own – no boy robbed them; the animals were their own – it was everybody's interest to be kind to them; every tool and implement they used was their own – it must be taken care of and repaired on the first sign of needing it.[127]

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[124] [C.H. Spence], Review of *The Conflicts of Capital and Labour, Historically and Economically Considered*, by George Howell, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 1879. For an understanding of the position of Green, see Docker, "Can the Centre Hold?" 61-3.

[125] [C.H. Spence], "Labour Movements in Europe and America," *Register*, 16 August 1878.

[126] Spence, "The Democratic Ideal – III." Bellamy described his notion of nationalism as being utterly different from "anarchistic socialism, both as to ends and to means. Its social ideal is a perfectly organized industrial system which, by reason of the close interlocking of its wheels, shall work at a minimum of friction with a maximum result of wealth and leisure for all. This end it would not attain by revolution but by an orderly evolution of the republican idea of the equal interest of all in the State." *New Nation*, date unknown, quoted in Sylvia Bellamy, "Edward Bellamy, the American Prophet (1850-1898)", in *Edward Bellamy Abroad: An American Prophet's Influence*, ed. Sylvia Bellamy (New York: Twayne, 1962), 33.

[127] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 66. Clapperton advocated a type of socialism that was pre-Marxian in its emphasis on a "social" as opposed to "individual" approach; she wrote: "towards the idea of Socialism society must slowly move, but crude socialism in method has gone astray, and real socialism is yet in an early stage." She defined socialism as "concerted action for social ends," and regarded "motives to socialism of a purely voluntary nature [as] intellectually, emotionally and morally superior." *Scientific Meliorism* 396-7.

Her knowledge of the working class was limited, however; as Susan Magarey notes, "she seems to have considered the needs of working-class women already cared for: in 1878 she asserted that factory and workshop legislation protected women and children from overwork, and that the sewing machine had improved the condition of needlewomen. She clearly knew nothing of conditions in South Australia."[128] The conditions that Magarey refers to include the lack of protective legislation regarding the hours worked by women and children, and the alleged existence of sweating among needlewomen and machinists as late as 1904.

The fact that Spence became involved in the establishment of the South Australian Co-operative Clothing Factory in 1902 would seem to indicate that she was closer to an understanding of working class conditions than Magarey's comments suggest. This experience did give her the opportunity to see her ideal of cooperation achieve reality in terms of cooperation between classes, as well as providing a concrete form of support for working women.[129] In opening the factory, Spence spelt out the benefits that could accrue to workers through such ventures: working women could obtain a measure of "protection against oppression" by forming cooperative societies that would allow them to earn a living wage and "they would be able to produce work and more of it at less cost to their health than under the usual conditions."[130] Unfortunately, the venture failed in 1913, and was taken over by a larger factory. For someone who viewed cooperation as "the only force that seems calculated to stem the unrestricted rage of competition …" this would have been a disappointment had she lived to see it.[131] Her niece, Lucy Morice, later observed that "the workers had no real interest in or understanding of co-operation … Australians are not a co-operative people … they are strongly individualistic and suspicious of anything new which may be a try-on."[132] Both Spence's remarks at the

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[128] Magarey, "Radical Woman: Catherine Spence", 125.

[129] For details of Spence's involvement in this project, see Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 188-90.

[130] "S.A. Co-operative Clothing Factory," *Adelaide Advertiser*, 25 February 1902, 6.

[131] [C.H. Spence], "Cooperative Stores," *Register*, 25 October 1879.

[132] Lucy Spence Morice, "Auntie Kate," [n.d.] in SLSA archives, 5.

opening about the theoretical benefits that could accrue to the workers and Morice's condemnation of the working class would seem to confirm Magarey's assessment that the enterprise "embodied the maternalist attitude that she had expressed before … Her involvement … does not absolve her from being, however unintentionally, complicit in the maintenance of bourgeois hegemony."[133]

While Spence's involvement with the clothing factory might have been more related to her enthusiasm for cooperation than to any real understanding of the conditions of workers, it did give her some practical knowledge of a movement she had little experience of. Rejecting rampant competition, as well as the impracticality of socialism, Spence regarded voluntary cooperation as the way to achieve optimal economic and social progress, seeing it as "the development of the democratic spirit in the industrial world."[134] Consistent with her support for a levelling of society which also permitted a limited amount of individualism to flourish, she claimed that "co-operation is the only force that seems calculated to stem the unrestricted rage of competition, and which, rightly understood, can gather together the little rills of savings of the poor, so as to enable them to become capitalists themselves."[135] She expressed disappointment that cooperation was not progressing in Australia as quickly as she would like, a result she attributed to "the principle [being] too slow for the Socialist and too tolerant for the Trade Unionist and yet it is from the spread of the idea of voluntary association that real deliverance from the thraldom of labour to capital must come."[136] A similar conclusion was reached by Mary Gilmore after her disillusioning experience with the New Australia and Cosme utopian experiments; she wrote to her husband in 1900 that:

> I have come to the conclusion that Communism is a failure – is not attainable … and enforced Communism is worse than none. I think after all co-operation with equal sharing is the truest and most possible – gives most good with fewest ill results.[137]

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[133] Magarey, "Radical Woman: Catherine Spence", 125.

[134] Spence, "The Democratic Ideal – III."

[135] Spence, "Cooperative Stores."

[136] Spence, "The Democratic Ideal – III."

[137] Quoted in Wilde, *Courage a Grace: A Biography of Dame Mary Gilmore*, 119.

Certainly Gilmore had more practical knowledge than Spence of the pitfalls of socialist living, but Spence had reached the same conclusion without having to endure the hardships of life in Paraguay; her knowledge may have been theoretical but she had a solid understanding of the behaviour of human beings.

While cooperation might have been Spence's ideal, she was pragmatic enough to realise that the working class was not always able to embrace it, nor did they reap the advantages when it was implemented. The introduction of cooperative stores in England by "a richer class" had led "not so much [to] the accumulation of capital or selling a genuinely good article at market price for cash, as [to] the lowering of the price of the article to the consumer … thus making each man's yearly income potentially larger." But it had done nothing for the very poor whose "commodities pass through many hands; [who] pay for the heavy risks of credit; [whose] individual purchases are so small that they cannot demand a discount … ; [and who] run more risks of adulteration and short weight than the more educated purchasers do …"[138] She wrote about the nature of the cooperative movement in England as well as the problems related to "spurious imitations," concluding that the "progress of genuine co-operation in the United Kingdom … is encouraging to the friends of co-operation all over the world," and expressing confidence that "there is ample scope for its beneficial expansion" in South Australia.[139]

Spence was also positive about the possibilities for progress which might result from the cooperative village settlements that became popular in some Australian colonies in the late nineteenth century, referring to the settlements along the Murray River as "the boldest experiment for the solution of the unemployed problem ever attempted anywhere."[140] In 1896, she spent a fortnight visiting several of these, wanting to see for

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[138] CHS, "Wealth and Waste, I - Credit and Caprice," *The Australasian*, 10 May 1879.

[139] Spence, "Cooperative Stores."

[140] C.H. Spence, "The Unemployed and the Land. A Bold Experiment," [n.d.], ML MSS. For a description of village settlements in Victoria, see J.M. Powell, "An Australian Utopia," *The Australian Geographer* xii, no. 4 (1973). There is also an interesting analysis of the diaries and letters of Elsie Birks, a pioneer of the settlement at Murtho, S.A. and relative of some of the settlers of William Lane's New Australia in

herself how well they worked. She returned to Adelaide impressed by the cooperative spirit that prevailed in most of them. An article on her journey, published in the *Register*, records many details of the settlements, from the size of each and the amount of investment required by each settler to the amount of produce harvested and consumed.[141] As always, she is concerned with numbers and money, as well as with more qualitative assessments. Given Spence's own utopian imaginings, her interest is not surprising. Indeed, the 1890s were a time when utopianism was at a "high point" in Australia, as Bill Metcalf notes, with village settlements being just one form of utopian experiment.[142]

Voluntary cooperation was only one of the means of advancing the general economic well-being of society in Spence's view. In spite of her rejection of the state socialism of Edward Bellamy, there was a role for government in helping to even out some of the inequalities that were so glaring in America and Britain. Rather than having a system that creates "plutocrats and proletaries" as in the United States, Australians "have cause to be thankful for our State-made and State-controlled railways, for our State-owned telegraph lines, for our eight-hours day, and our strong Trades Union," she wrote.[143] The state could perform some functions, such as constructing and operating roads, railways and telegraph lines, undertaking the census, and establishing schools and universities, more effectively and efficiently than private citizens could. All of the asylums, hospitals and schools in the England of the future are funded by the total community

> with even and not fitful 'liberality,' instead of being a heavy burden on the benevolent portion of the public. A Scrooge, if any such existed, could not now excuse himself from payment of the general burden by saying that he paid compulsorily to maintain the workhouse, for that instititution no longer existed.[144]

Paraguay, in Elaine Stratford, "Gender, Place and Travel: The Case of Elsie Birks, South Australian Pioneer.," *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. September (2000).

[141] See C.H. Spence, A Colonist of 1839, "A Fortnight on the Village Settlements," *Register*, 19 October 1896.

[142] Metcalf, *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality*, 18. For more information about nineteenth-century utopian settlements in Australia, see Craig Cormick, *Kurikka's Dreaming: The True Story of Matti Kurikka Socialist, Utopian and Dreamer* (East Roseville, NSW: Simon and Schuster, 2000); Metcalf, *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality;* Metcalf and Huf, *Herrnhut*.

[143] A Colonist of 1839, "The Democratic Ideal – I."

[144] Both quotations: Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 76.

Even as far back as 1866, Spence could see the benefits of government legislation in aiding private philanthropic efforts and in "preventing the inheritance of colossal fortunes."[145]

Spence's ideas for political and economic advancement were complex. A Utilitarian in some respects, she also supported government intervention in a number of areas. Like many in the nineteenth century, she perceived the growing ineffectiveness of *laissez-faire* and utilitarianism in the face of increasing economic problems and "the challenge of the labour movement."[146] But she did not succumb to the general feeling of crisis that John Docker notes was evident in politics and ideology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead, Spence created utopias that were neither deeply pessimistic nor unrealistically optimistic. In her journalism and sermons, she called for individuals to consider the greater good of society for, like John Stuart Mill, she rejected both untrammelled individualism and the thought of a world made dull by uniformity and conformity; as she wrote in 1861, "political equality is desirable" but "mental and social equality is not desirable, even though it were possible."[147] She also wrote in 1877 that "one of the greatest elements in the world's progress has been the strong personality which enters into all our ideas, and makes us think that we can do many things better than other people."[148] Foreshadowing some of the problems that occurred in her utopia of Columba, Spence suggested that "with no ambition, no magnanimity, no originality, no eccentricity; with no opposition and no defence – the world would be a dull world, and man would not make that progress for which he was intended by his maker."[149]

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[145] Catherine Helen Spence, "An Australian's Impression of England," *Cornhill Magazine* 13 (1866): 117&113.

[146] Docker, "Can the Centre Hold?" 57.

[147] Spence, *A Plea for Pure Democracy*, 22.

[148] Spence, "Government by Party."

[149] Spence, *A Plea for Pure Democracy*, 22.

Spence's political views underwent considerable change between the 1850s and the 1890s. Her condemnation of governments which interfered too much, and voters who elected governments on the basis of partisan interests had become transformed into pride in the implementation of legislation in Australia that helped to equalise the opportunities of the working class and satisfaction that South Australian women were among the first women in the world to be enfranchised, as well as being the means for Australian women to obtain a vote for the federal government in both houses.[150] She supported trade unionism but was unimpressed with the electoral power of the working classes when it translated into policies that meant "extravagant" public expenditure. She rejected the state socialism of Edward Bellamy but argued that the increased simplicity of living he promoted was necessary if progress was to be made: "the beginning of a truly democratic society must find its promoters willing, nay eager, to strip themselves of superfluities which others cannot attain to – will accept of nothing which others cannot have on the same terms."[151] This voluntary surrender of the trappings of wealth by the rich was similar to the way that Robert Owen envisioned his form of socialism working: "we merely thought the wealthy would surrender their advantages when they saw it was intelligent and decent and to their moral benefit to do so."[152]

Like Green, Spence's preference was for voluntary initiatives like cooperation, not nationalisation. In her views on race and feminism, Spence's politics could be contradictory at times, but in her later life tended to be more radical. It is possible to see in her ideas elements of the new or social liberalism[153] and Christian idealism of Green, the state socialism of Bellamy, the social Darwinism of Spencer, the peculiar brand of socialism advocated by Jane Hume Clapperton, and the utilitarianism and emphasis on individualism of Mill. In an Australian context, her social liberalism resembles that of

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[150] Spence, "An Australian's Impressions of America," 245; Spence, *Autobiography*, 42.

[151] A Colonist of 1839, "The Democratic Ideal – II," *Register*, 3 June 1892.

[152] Quoted in Gatrell, Introduction, 16.

[153] Marian Sawer suggests that the market liberalism of the late twentieth century has become known as the new liberalism, making the term "social liberalism" less ambiguous in the earlier context. Marian Sawer, "The Ethical State: Social Liberalism and the Critique of Contract," *Australian Historical Studies* 31, no. 114 (2000): 67.

other significant intellectual figures who endorsed the ideas of T.H. Green. Charles Pearson, for example, who was an academic and politician as well as being a friend and correspondent of Spence; Alfred Deakin, reformer and prime minister; Francis Anderson, husband of feminist Maybanke Anderson and an academic who went on to become the first Challis professor of logic and mental philosophy at the University of Sydney; and Charles Strong, a reformer and the first minister of the Australian Church, all expressed views similar to Spence.[154] All of these names have survived to varying degrees in the pages of Australian political history and yet, despite the fact that she is prominent in discussions of Australian social history, there are few mentions of Spence's thinking in discussions about nineteenth-century Australian politics.

One exception is the work on the origins of Australian political thinking by Gregory Melleuish, in which he links Spence's "powerful vision of a public or civic order founded on de-centralised, self-regulating communities that worked together co-operatively to secure the public good," with the ideal of "distributivism."[155] In Hillaire Belloc's coining of the term, distributivism meant "a form of political organisation that is neither capitalist nor socialist but which preserves a relative equality of ownership," an idea which harked back to the sixteenth-century ideal of commonwealth. Although Belloc's formulation of distributivism was anti-statist, Melleuish broadens its meaning to reflect an additional requirement for state support which accompanied its Australian manifestation, where the ideals of distributivism "can only flourish if there is a regulatory state able to prevent the concentration of wealth and excessive competition."[156] He discusses Spence's emphasis on cooperation, her search for a balance between individualism and equality and her attempts to describe a political system that falls somewhere between capitalism and socialism, particularly as depicted in *A Week in the Future*. Other nineteenth-century Australian political thinkers who Melleuish considers espoused distributivism were J.D. Lang and John West, both of whom propounded "an ideal of independent individualism

[154] For discussion of the views of these men, see Sawer, "The Ethical State."

[155] Melleuish, "Distributivism: The Australian Political Ideal?," 26.

[156] Both quotations ibid., 20.

that has strong liberal elements."[157] It is arguable whether Spence's thinking drew more heavily from this mediaeval concept of the commonwealth or from Victorian liberal humanist ideas, but it would appear that Spence's Scottish background contributed to the fusion of ideas that were manifest in her work, just as it played a role in the political writing of both Lang and West.[158]

Spence's intellectual influences also included the Enlightenment thinking that accompanied her embrace of Unitarianism, as discussed in chapter four. During the nineteenth century, the application of science in the form of technology came to be seen as a force for the betterment of the material conditions of human life, following on from the believers of the late eighteenth century such as the Marquis de Condorcet. For Condorcet, "science [was] the golden avenue to the future and to the final perfection and egalitarian spirit of the future."[159] And so it was for many in the nineteenth century, with industrialisation becoming one of the prime applications of science in the seemingly inevitable progress of society. As Bruce McPherson observes, "machines were the embodiment of this transformation [of the world]: they increased the speed, comfort and range of transportation; they increased the nature, function and efficiency of manufactures … In form, function, and efficiency machines were progressive."[160] In Australia, these sentiments were expressed by Ferdinand von Mueller in 1880 in addressing a congress of social scientists: "we live in the main century of universal discovery; it has been the happy share of the present and of the foregoing generation, to witness a scientific and industrial progress, such as in its varied directions and extent was never anticipated even by the vision of sages in the past …."[161]

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[157] Ibid.: 23.

[158] Melleuish notes that West was "an heir of the Scottish enlightenment" and Lang was "an heir of the Scottish tradition of calvinist community." Ibid.: 22.

[159] Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 208.

[160] McPherson, *Between Two Worlds*, 1.

[161] Quoted in Frank Crowley, *A Documentary History of Australia:Colonial Australia 1875-1900*, 6 vols., vol. 3 (West Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1980), 90.

This faith in science was not universal, however. French philosophers of the seventeenth century such as Blaise Pascal and Bernard de Fontenelle agreed that although science could lead to progress, "it still had to be shown that scientific progress would do anything to improve men morally or to remedy the ills of human society."[162] Spence's attitude was similar. She could see the advantages of science, writing that "all science and invention are in the domain of economic production, excellent in themselves," but she also recognised that there were disadvantages, with the results of such inventions being "disastrous in reducing the number of paid workers."[163] The benefits of industrialisation were obvious to her: "the factory system of combined and differentiated labour, working with costly machines all over the world, is a powerful agent in civilization."[164] Yet she also observes that there are flaws in the process, noting that this "application and utilization of the forces of Nature … has [sic] not resulted in the emancipation of the mass of the working classes from their old precarious, dependent, miserable condition. The disparity of conditions never was so marked even in the days of feudal lords and serfs."[165]

Spence argued that the invention of new machines was not always a progressive step, with sewing machines, for example, being "invented before the middle class woman was prepared for the leisure she might gain from it for better and wiser ends."[166] This had resulted in "the introduction of a style of dress elaborate, costly and inconvenient, under which the sensible groan, and against which the moralist preaches in vain." In *Handfasted*, Spence presents both sides of the issue. On the one hand are the advantages that Liliard and Hugh Keith observe when they visit a cotton mill in America, "where the workmen and workwomen were well-clothed, well-fed and under fairly good conditions for health and happiness, owing to good wages and temperance …." (297). On the other hand, Liliard "could not help contrasting the noise, the dust, the heat, and the closeness of

[162] John Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 201.

[163] Letter from C.H. Spence, "The Population Question," *Woman's Sphere*, 10 May 1903.

[164] A Colonist of 1839, "A Phase of Industrial Life," *Observer*, 4 November 1882.

[165] A Colonist of 1839, Review of *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness*.

[166] A Colonist of 1839, "Some Social Aspects of Early Colonial Life."

even a well-managed factory, with the whirr of the spinning-wheel and the click of the loom in the Columban cottages, open to the fresh air, with the children running in and out, and the accompaniment of the worker's song" (297-8). Like William Morris in *News from Nowhere*, Spence is suggesting that the old ways are more conducive to a happy, free and natural way of life than is possible in the modern, automated world. Again, however, the pragmatic Spence realises how inexorable the process of change is, with Hugh Keith noting that "it is only a question of time" until Columba is annexed by America and the ways of the outside world are introduced to "Sleepy Hollow." Preaching in 1904, she noted that the desire by Morris and Ruskin "to turn back the wheels of progress and return to the slow processes, the sound workmanship, and the independent position of the individual artisan … is impossible. Only a limited and comparatively wealthy few could indulge their taste and their ethical feelings by buying handmade articles."[167] Spence's view of scientific and technological progress was thus largely positive, but she saw them as only a partial answer to the question of how human beings were to progress.

The rationalism that pervaded much of Spence's journalism and *A Week in the Future* was moderated by her spiritual and moral beliefs in her attitudes toward science, as it had been in relation to eugenics. While she enthusiastically embraced the idea of progress as it affected the social, political and economic aspects of society, she felt they were insufficient for overall progress to occur: moral progress was also essential. Earlier utopian thinkers such as Saint-Simon and Comte had, as P.R. Best suggests, "synthesized the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the growing emphasis on the spirituality of society." Later in the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill defined progress to include the belief that "man, by denying his habitual failings, would be able to perfect his character and pursue spiritual perfection. By doing so the individual was contributing to the perfection and progress of society."[168] This is the idea of progress which most closely

[167] Condensed version of sermon given at the Unitarian Christian Church 17 July 1904, "Brotherhood," *Herald*, 20 August 1904.

[168] P.R. Best, "The Idea of Progress in Victorian Thought," *Queensland Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (1977): 32, 33.

resembles Spence's, in which moral evolution was key. Her hopes for the future of humanity lay "not in repressing the self-regarding faculties necessary for self-preservation and happiness, but in directing them more wisely, so that the highest individual advantage of every human being and of every nation may be pursued … to the furtherance of the general well-being of the whole body politic."[169]

One of the chief means of achieving the more holistic kind of progress that Spence desired was education. In many ways, *A Week in the Future* represents the possibilities that flow from the implementation that Robert Owen had in mind when he designed his New Lanark factory village in the late eighteenth century. He described it as an

> experiment [which] cannot fail to prove the certain means of renovating the moral and religious principles of the world, by showing whence arise the various opinions, manners, vices and virtues of mankind and how the best or the worst of them may, with mathematical precision, be taught to the rising generation."[170]

Thinkers such as Owen, who wanted to see a national system of education in England, and the French philosopher Condorcet, who stressed the importance of everyone being educated in the laws and techniques of science, as well as in the arts, provided inspiration to many a reformer in England and Australia. Australia in the 1860s was, according to Beverley Kingston, "an educational theorist's dream – such scope, such potential, such freedom from vested interests and handicapping attitudes."[171] John Woolley, for example, saw how combining "high standards of popular teaching with its widest possible diffusion" could assist in the establishment of democracy in Australia.[172] Spence foresaw the future of Australia resting on the education of its younger citizens, with all children "being prepared for the duties of citizenship by receiving a good plain education at small cost - and at no cost at all, if the parents are very poor."[173] And she meant *all* children.

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[169] Spence, "Individuality."

[170] Owen, "A New View of Society", 125.

[171] Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1860-1900: Glad, Confident Morning*, 199.

[172] Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*, 167.

[173] Gatrell, Introduction, 32-3; Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 210; Spence, *Laws*, 10.

She supported increased accessibility to education for poor children, as well as improved schooling for middle-class girls, who were handicapped by the kind of "slovenly and perfunctory" teaching that was the result of middle-class gender inequality. She was scathing about the standard of education provided to girls by private schools, where girls were sent for social reasons, observing that:

> if the music is brilliant, the drawing showy, and the languages taught with what is supposed to be a proper accent, parents seem to think that all the ordinary branches of an English education may be taught in the most ordinary manner and with the most meagre results."[174]

This desire for education that was more accessible and of a higher standard was typical of middle-class support for popular education in colonial Australia which aimed at "advancing the social, intellectual, and (as a direct result of these latter) the moral condition of the people."[175] Already accepted in England as a means of avoiding political revolution, popular education was seen in Australia more as a method of improving morals.[176]

The type of education would be of great importance, however, and Spence describes in a variety of media what the ideal education would consist of. In her utopian novel, *A Week in the Future*, she portrays a system that would mould children into sensible, morally sound citizens who would respect the rights of others. It would deploy kindness, patience and love, instilled through a "balance of intellectual, physical and moral development,"[177] rather than through fear or competition. Breaking the will of children so that they might learn better was anathema in this utopian education system, for the will was "the character, the very *ego* of each individual; it can be influenced by love and by reason, but it must be held sacred from violence and arbitrary power" (78). She preached about the flaws in the current education system, at least as it operated in Australia, because of its

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[174] [C.H. Spence], "Middle-Class Education for Girls," *Register*, 20 January 1877.

[175] Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, Report for the Year 1837, quoted in Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*, 162.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ljungdahl, Prologue, 11.

failure to teach a full morality that was inclusive of both the individual's own good and that of others. The result was a person who

> has learned to look on his own things, to seek his own good and that is a step [forward from] the aimless objectless mental horizon of his parents. But he has not learned to seek the good of others – as the good citizen and the good Christian should do ….”[178]

She was also concerned about the traditional education that boys received, regarding humanities students as having “the least perception of the modern spirit or sympathy with the sorrows of the world,” for the classical authors they studied “were deficient [in] the spirit of broad humanity and the sense of humour.”[179]

For Spence, the complete development of a human being required an education that cultivated altruism; “an aristocracy of letters” such as that which had existed in the past in China “is no protection to the poor and ignorant from oppression or degradation.”[180] Spence's connection between a human being's conduct and their education was reminiscent of Matthew Arnold's belief in conduct or moral action being “three-fourths of life,” with schools being the means by which “moral knowledge” was taught to individuals.[181] In her autobiography, Spence wrote in terms very similar to Arnold that “as conduct is the greater part of life, and morality, not only the bond of social union, but the main source of happiness, I took the ethical part of the subject first [in her school textbook], and tried to explain that education was of no value unless it was used for good purposes.”[182] Thus she perceived medicine as one of the few modern professions that was humanistic in its practice: “it takes us into the homes of the poor more intimately than even the clergyman, and it offers remedies and palliatives as well as advice.”[183] Nevertheless, the utilitarian argument that unless education had some practical value it

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[178] C.H. Spence, Sermon, “Engines of Social Progress,” 22 September 1907.

[179] Spence, *Autobiography*, 59.

[180] Ibid., 58.

[181] Quoted in McPherson, *Between Two Worlds*, 51.

[182] Spence, *Autobiography*, 58.

[183] Ibid., 59.

should not be taught was to Spence's mind "injurious"; education was not only for teaching those things that need to be known, but "it is meant in a still higher degree to train the mind, so as to enable it to learn many things for itself after leaving school," as well as providing the capacity for critical thinking which would enable students to "pick out the most valuable information …."[184]

Spence's attitudes towards education as a vehicle for the progress of society reflect something of the influence not only of nineteenth-century thinkers such as Robert Owen and Matthew Arnold, but of the way in which Enlightenment thought "in its Australian guise,"[185] could accommodate Christianity. The conflict that John Gascoigne notes often existed between the two modes of thought did not hold true in all circumstances: "there were also ways in which the two could complement each other," especially in relation to "problems such as education or criminology."[186] This was true of much of Spence's thinking, with her religious belief encompassing many of the ideals of the Enlightenment, not least of which was a faith in progress. The application of reason and the power of knowledge, both important to Enlightenment thought and to Unitarianism, were engines that could drive human progress. They were also well-suited to the attitudes that European arrivals brought with them as a part of their colonising project: Australia was a land that "could be moulded to meet their needs; that for all the strangeness and harshness of the landscape it was amenable to improvement."[187]

The continuing progress of Australia, and particularly South Australia whose utopian origins epitomised the British idea of progress in the early nineteenth-century, was seen by Spence as largely the result of the migration of a particular type of British citizen. She saw British influence as singularly important to colonies all over the world, and took

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[184] [C.H. Spence], "Middle-Class Education for Girls," *Register*, 30 January 1877.

[185] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, 6.

[186] Ibid. Although Unitarianism was seen by some as threatening to Christianity because of its rejection of the doctrine of the trinity (see Scott, *The Halfway House to Infidelity*, 1), the Adelaide congregation had specifically voted against dropping the word "Christian" from the name of their church in 1857. Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, 76.

[187] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, 9.

great pride in the links between Britain and Australia. In 1877, she argued for a form of federation that involved union with Britain, discussing the various options available. The relationship she saw as most desirable was one in which the colonies and Britain "could co-operate for common Imperial and international objects, and leave each other free for domestic and local legislation …."[188] The London of 1988 in *A Week in the Future* is

> the central heart of the Commonwealth … the ancient capital of all the daughter states which had been a-building so long [where] were preserved the archives … which recorded the long growth of civilisation, liberty and orderly Government, which had been transplanted with some modifications to the ends of the earth."[189]

Britain's cultural heritage, too, as noted in chapter one, was highly valued by Spence; in the 1877 article in *Fraser's* she wrote that

> the bonds of race and of language, the common traditions which we have inherited, the kindred institutions which we have developed, the glorious literature which we possess as a priceless birthright, and the best interests of both colonies and mother country, all give reason for close and kindly union, unaffected by difference of latitude and longitude …."[190]

Nevertheless, in her earlier writing, she idealises Australia as possessing what Fiona Giles refers to as a "common place," in the sense of being ordinary, and of providing "a sense of community."[191] The central characters in her novels such as Clara Morison and Jane Melville become engaged in journeys of personal progress that parallel those of the Australian colonies in their transformation from collections of disparate and quite separate individuals to a more unified, communal world. Spence saw her own life as one which "connects itself naturally with the growth and development of the province of South Australia," and her heroines follow in her footsteps, "transforming their alienation into a vital precipitator of personal growth," becoming more socially useful than they could ever have been in the old world. [192] The colonies that become the homes of Clara and Jane, of the Lindsays and the Oswalds (and the Spences) all end up as better places,

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[188] Catherine Helen Spence, "Australian Federation and Imperial Union," *Fraser's Magazine* (1877): 526.

[189] Spence, *A Week in the Future*, 115.

[190] Spence, "Australian Federation and Imperial Union," 539.

[191] Giles, *Too Far Everywhere*, 50.

[192] Spence, *Autobiography*, 7; Thomson, "Afterword", 367.

or at least have the potential to be better places once aberrations like the gold rush are over.[193]

Spence's ideas about Britain were central to her vision of a future Australia that contained what she saw as the best that the British Empire could offer, but she was not unquestioningly pro-British. Australia had possibilities that were difficult to imagine in the old world, even if it would "take several generations before we can have a distinct national character of our own."[194] She was not an uncritical imperialist; while not questioning the dispossession of Australian Aborigines, she did at least suggest that it was not necessarily right for white settlers to usurp the Indian land in Columba in *Handfasted*. And although the hero of that novel, Hugh Keith, remarks that the utopia of Columba will inevitably be absorbed by the United States, there is a note of wistfulness about his prediction, suggesting that the imperialism of great nations is not always a good thing. However, there were benefits to Britain's imperialism to be found in the values of hard work and high moral standards that Spence believed were the traits of many British migrants, and in the respect for others that the best emigrants showed. The results would eventually be seen in this new land for "every man in leaving the old country has left some of his ignorance and prejudices behind him, and the people of South Australia are being daily educated, by the mixture of races, by their material prosperity, by the field given for honest ambition, by a free press, and free discussion."[195] She saw British migrants as ideal settlers: "what we colonists bring from England," she noted in 1880, "are the enterprise and energy which make all the world our home and turn the unknown and the untried to the best account."[196] These were the people that Spence believed were best-suited to turning Australia into a form of utopia that would combine the best of the

[193] Spence regarded the gold rush in Victoria as having a negative influence, despite the opportunity it offered to thousands. The problem was that "ordinary industries were paralysed. Shepherds left their flocks, farmers their land, clerks their desks, and artisans their trades" (Autobiography, 27). It did provide the opportunity, however, for women to perform activities that had previously been done by men, and for men to do domestic chores that they had never done before, as Spence observes in *Clara Morison*, and William Bakewell describes in his preface to *Clara Morison*.

[194] Spence, "An Australian's Impression of England," 110.

[195] Spence, *A Plea for Pure Democracy*, 18.

[196] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "Old Days and New," *Observer*, 3 January 1880.

old world and the new, where the ethic of hard work would be rewarded equitably, unlike "the standard of overcrowded countries where bread is dear and human life and strength cheap."[197]

Spence's emotional and cultural ties to Britain possibly contributed to her lack of identification with the nationalism that had such a powerful effect on the work and views of some Australian writers and literary institutions such as the *Bulletin* in the late nineteenth century.[198] She was proud of Australia but could not be regarded as a nationalist in any narrow or parochial sense. She was convinced that the possibility existed in Australia for "the establishment of the very pleasantest society in the world," and leaves the reader of *Handfasted*, as Helen Thomson suggests, "with a sense that the real utopia is perhaps the Melbourne which Hugh Keith leaves and returns to …."[199] In some ways she reflected the desire of the founders and settlers of South Australia to escape some of the more restrictive conventions of early nineteenth-century England but who sensed the possibilities for the future in a British colony whose "very existence … was evidence of progress and the power of British civilisation."[200] On her trip to Britain in 1864, she delighted in seeing friends and relatives in Melrose again, and revisiting the home of her childhood. Where they grieved, however, that she "had been banished from the romantic associations and the high civilization of Melrose to rough it in the wilds, my heart was full of thankfulness that I had moved to the wider spaces and more varied activities of a new and progressive colony."[201] She appears to have regarded herself as both British and Australian, supporting Andrew Hassam's contention about visitors to

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[197] [C.H. Spence], A Colonist of 1839, "Some Social Aspects of Early Colonial Life,"528.

[198] On the subject of Australian literary nationalism in the late nineteenth century, see, for example, the section entitled "A National Literary Studies?" in Delys Bird, Robert Dixon, and Christopher Lee, eds., *Authority and Influence: Australian Literary Criticism 1950-2001* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2001); Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox;* Vance Palmer, *The Legend of the Nineties* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1954); Chris Wallace-Crabbe, ed., *The Australian Nationalists* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1971); G.A. Wilkes, *The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn: Literary Evidence for Australia's Cultural Development* (Port Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1981).

[199] [C.H. Spence], C.H.S., "The Modern Spirit," *Australasian*, 28 June 1879; Thomson, Afterword to *Handfasted*, 365.

[200] Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1860-1900: Glad, Confident Morning*, 57.

[201] Spence, *Autobiography*, 34.

Britain from Australia in the nineteenth century that they experienced the "inclusivity of an identity that could … be Scottish, British and Australian."[202] Spence's pride in both Australia and Britain suggest that she had a broad perspective of the world, one that excluded narrow notions of empire and nation. Her idea of progress took into consideration the best of what the world had to offer and transcended national and, occasionally, cultural boundaries.

In her faith in the possibility of progress Spence resembled many of her intellectual peers in Victorian Britain and Australia but she was also distinctive because she combined optimism for the future with a desire to retain the best aspects of the past, as well as possessing a pragmatism that recognised and accepted the failings of human beings. Her faith in progress was not blind; she observed the shortcomings of what passed for progress, so that her writing contains echoes of the doubts of significant Victorian figures such as John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle who "saw that a facile public celebration of progress was illusory if it did not lead to the development and perfection of particular men and women as well as to the general advancement of society."[203] Enlightenment thought also played a part in her ideas, with the words of that important eighteenth-century figure and pioneer of feminism, Mary Wollstonecraft, foreshadowing the work of Spence: "Rousseau exerts himself to prove that all *was* right originally: a crowd of authors that all *is* now right: and I, that "all will *be* right"[204] Neither Wollstonecraft nor Spence regarded the world as a perfect place but, rather, believed that it was humankind's duty to"perfect it, through criticism, reform, education, knowledge, science, industry and sheer energy," as good a summary as any of the ends of Spence's work.[205]

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[202] Andrew Hassam, *Through Australian Eyes: Colonial Perceptions of Imperial Britain* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 28.

[203] McPherson, *Between Two Worlds*, viii. McPherson's book contains a useful discussion about the ambivalence towards progress felt by Carlyle, Ruskin, John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold.

[204] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 95.

[205] Porter, *Enlightenment*, 425-6.

Conclusion

Catherine Spence, through the consistently high quality of her journalism over a number of years and the depth and the breadth of the ideas discussed in her sermons, as well as her non-fiction and fiction writing, adopted the role of sage in order to try to assist her fellow citizens understand how they could create the best possible society in Australia. In a manner similar to outstanding intellectual figures in Victorian Britain such as George Eliot and Harriet Martineau, she took on the role of a public moralist and instructor who was never daunted in pointing out right and wrong according to her moral standards and providing guidance to her readers and listeners on the path that should be followed. She often undertook the role of social critic, arguing for the need to change the *status quo* in politics, social relationships and the economy. The journalistic voice she used indicates that she acted from within the middle-class power structure which was dominant in mid- to late nineteenth-century South Australia, instructing her own class on how it should behave, and encouraging the working class to aspire to the material and moral levels that she felt should prevail among the middle class. At the same time, she retained a sufficiently independent voice that she could criticise the *status quo* without being marginalised on the basis of her gender.

Being middle-class and female, Spence existed both within and outside the dominant power groups of her society, a society which had inherited old-world traditions and conventions as well as creating new ways of dealing with unique situations and problems. Without the authority or power that intellectual middle-class men appeared to automatically wield, Spence had to use some of the same tactics and strategies adopted by her female peers in England, leading her to appear as both an organic and a traditional intellectual.[1] This straddling of the old and the new, the fluidities of class and gender, and Spence's education and ambition, enabled her to transcend the fading boundaries between the public and the private spheres and to take advantage of the opportunities that arose in

[1] See ch. 1.

nineteenth-century Australia, an environment that seemed less reluctant to accept the idea of an intellectual woman than Victorian Britain.

Spence's engagement with many of the significant intellectual streams of the nineteenth century was profound and wide-ranging, and often involved significant changes in her views. From a politically conservative stance on the matter of state support for religious schools, for example, she moved towards advocacy of many elements of socialism in the 1880s, most particularly in her utopian novella, *A Week in the Future*. Her early novels, *Clara Morison* and *Mr Hogarth's Will*, reveal her personal concerns about the situation of single women. In these novels, she highlights the importance of financial independence for single women and attacks the inequitable situation of women who, even when they were educated to the same standard as men, were refused employment on the grounds of their gender. From a position of not regarding women's suffrage as important, she became, in the 1890s, a highly visible and public advocate of women's suffrage in South Australia. Catherine Spence's intellectual development was, in many respects, an example of the way she saw progress occurring more generally. She took on board the best ideas that the rest of the world and history had to offer as far as she could learn them, modifying and changing her views as she became more aware of injustices and inequities, and trying to turn them into practical, or at least thought-provoking, opportunities for the improvement of individuals and society. Something of this notion is contained in her description of the spread of ideas, in which she argues that

> the birth of a great new thought is often like the birth of a child. The germinal idea is received by a fertile mind, and after a longer or shorter period of gestation it comes to light with added characteristics, and not only capable of maintaining independent existence, but of giving birth to other thoughts of kindred excellence.[2]

So, too, for Spence was future progress built on past progress, modified by those who contemplate and act, and adapted by necessity to circumstances and the age, but never completely discarding what could be valuable from the past. Her appreciation of both the

[2] [C.H. Spence], "Unacknowledged Borrowing," *Register Supplement*, 6 January 1881.

old world and the new, and her development and transformation of ideas that could contribute to the progress of Australia, offer confirmation of what David Malouf has said about Australia's relationship with Europe:

> We speak of these places we belong to as new worlds, but what they really are is the old world translated: but *translated*, with all that implies of re-interpretation and change, not simply *transported*. Our ways of thinking and feeling and doing were developed and tested over many centuries before we brought them to this new place, and gave them a different turn of meaning, different associations, a different shape and weight and colour, on new ground.[3]

While Spence respected the mild-mannered meliorism that contained elements of nostalgia for an arcadian past and which looked to the future as "a slow, consensual grasping towards something better"[4] subscribed to by George Eliot and so clearly represented in her novels, her writing represents a more active, positive and optimistic attempt to improve the lot of the working and middle classes, materially, spiritually and intellectually. Spence's vision is always turned towards the future, influenced by her experience of emigration to the young society of South Australia which had been founded on the utopian principles of Edward Wakefield and others, as well as her social milieu of educated, middle-class British settlers and her faith in the idea of progress.

Spence's insider-outsider status and possession of an intelligent and questioning mind that was influenced not only by Enlightenment notions of rationalism and the value of knowledge, but by the enthusiasm for social reform and intellectual and moral questioning that characterised a great deal of thinking within Victorian Britain, contributed to her development as both organic and traditional intellectual. She could participate in public discourse on a huge range of matters with a credibility endowed by her affinity with and status within influential social groups, while observing and criticising the society she lived in. Australia, too, had its effects on Spence, for she saw opportunities here which had not existed in the small, Scottish village of Melrose which she left in 1839. An egalitarianism that was founded on a rejection of the rigid hierarchies

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[3] David Malouf, *A Spirit of Play: The Making of Australian Consciousness* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1998), 26.

[4] Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*, 488.

within the class structure of Britain and the idealism that was a feature of South Australian society produced an atmosphere in which a utopian world-view such as Spence's could be reinforced, rather than subdued.

Spence was, however, at least partially a product of British radical dissent in the form of Unitarianism, a creed that was more in keeping with her independent and rational outlook than Presbyterianism was. The morality that pervaded her actions and thoughts was not one that was based on fear of an avenging God or any belief in a life hereafter, but on achieving the best possible world on this earth and in this life. The Australian Unitarian community lacked the reforming zeal that characterised British Unitarianism's radical history and its adherents, so that Spence seems to have more in common with the latter than the former. The relationship between Spence's morality and her religion was an organic one which makes it difficult to disentangle the effects of one on the other, but it is possible to see how her early religious doubt and taking up of the faith of people such as Joseph Priestley and Frances Power Cobbe encouraged and nurtured her own moral progress. She might have been a believer in the power of rationalism and knowledge, but this was combined with a strong morality, so that both ways of thinking and believing lay at the heart of her desire for a form of progress that was not just materially-based. Her path to enlightenment via religious doubt, her quest for a morality founded on something other than scriptural authority and her increasing engagement with ideas important in nineteenth-century Britain and Australia were more typical of the experiences of British Victorian intellectuals in the 1850s than of what was taking place in Australia at the time.

Similarly, Spence's feminism is occasionally characteristic of the mid-nineteenth-century British women's rights movement, with its accommodation of patriarchy and its apparent contradictions. Indeed, her writing reflects this, so that her fiction and non-fiction have something in common with the struggles of women writers such as Jane Austen and George Eliot. Her writing, like theirs, reveals a struggle between the "patriarchal socialization" that resulted in images conforming to male notions of the ideal woman and

the desire to break free of the limitations imposed by the ideology of patriarchy.[5] Spence never goes so far as to create a Bertha Mason or a Cathy Linton in her fiction through whom to express female rebellion, but in a quieter and saner way liberates her heroines or creates secondary female characters who are outside the boundaries of ordinary white middle-class male expectations (or what she perceives as those expectations). She also creates heroes who go beyond those boundaries, who become a kind of "new man" to accompany her mid-nineteenth-century version of the "new woman." Most of her novels end in the heroine and hero marrying and achieving a happy and apparently lasting companionship, demonstrating Spence's ideal inhabitants of a new society. Their ideal nature is based on the progress of individuals to wisdom through suffering, but the suffering of the women involves considerable questioning of the *status quo.* A similar critique occurs in her journalism, in which the voice of the writer, while apparently genderless, is often conservative in its approach despite the telling nature of its content. Even when addressing issues of concern to women, Spence attempts to highlight the cost to society of domestic violence or of a mediocre education for middle-class girls, demonstrating a form of feminism that was inscribed with humanist characteristics. In this way, she manages to share mainstream concerns about maintaining stability, while at the same time not alienating herself from her audience in charting a progressive course.

Spence has received criticism from twentieth-century critics for her apparent reinforcement of middle-class patriarchal hegemony, her élitest tendencies, and her racism. In a similar vein, Judith Allen writes of the problems that Rose Scott causes for contemporary feminists, who dismiss activists like her as "agents of bourgeois hegemony … She is chided for her neglect of class analysis, her elitism, her enjoyment of privilege and the irrelevance of her work to proletarian women."[6] While not denying the value of re-examining the past and using contemporary theory and tools to put the work of

[5] See Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Although Gilbert and Gubar use the term "patriarchal socialization" in relation to its effects on women's physical and mental states (p. 53), I believe it applies more generally to the ways in which nineteenth-century women writers were affected when writing about women.

[6] Allen, *Rose Scott: Vision and Revision in Feminism*, 260.

historical figures under the microscope, we cannot do so without acknowledging the context of their thinking. Certainly, Spence did not deny the value of patriarchal institutions such as family and marriage, but she did constantly question particular aspects of how patriarchal society operated to women's – and society's – detriment, and offered her own vision of how it might be better. She was élitist, insofar as she was no believer in the idea that the majority was always right, as well as desiring that the brightest and the best have a say in government. She was often a snob, but in spite of her concern to turn the undeserving poor into worthy citizens, could engage sincerely in efforts to help working women. Kay Daniels and others have accused her of promoting and furthering the cause of patriarchal bourgeois institutions that work to control the working class, but I would suggest that this is an anachronistic interpretation of Spence's work. What alternatives might she have been able to suggest for the care of abandoned and neglected children, for example, that would have been practicable in the 1870s?

In not wanting to offer a reading of Spence that suffers the same problems, I have tried to understand the intellectual life of Catherine Spence within the context of her life and times. That said I would like to draw on the recent comments of Edward Said in which he defined the role of the public intellectual as follows:

> The intellectual's role is to present alternative narratives and perspectives on history to those provided on behalf of official memory and national identity, which tend to propagate heroic anthems in order to sweep all before them … Intellectuals must also construct fields of co-existence rather than fields of battle … In the various contests over justice and human rights that so many of us feel we have joined, there needs to be a component that stresses the need for the redistribution of resources and opposes huge accumulations of power and capital that distort human life. Peace cannot exist without equality: this is an intellectual value desperately in need of reiteration, demonstration and reinforcement.[7]

I would contend that Catherine Spence was an intellectual figure by not only the standards of the nineteenth century, but also by the standards that Said sets for intellectuals in the twenty-first century. Spence offered an alternative view to the early to

[7] Edward Said, "The Case for Intellectuals," *The Age* 2001, 11.

mid-nineteenth-century fictional narratives that represented Australia as a man's land of bushrangers and convicts by representing female subjectivity and women's internal lives. As a Scottish migrant, she retained a clear-eyed fondness for her British heritage although she never valorised the past over the present. Her pragmatic and rational nature prevented her from romanticising Australia, or dwelling on Australia's convict past as a disadvantage in making progress in the future, allowing her "to see Australia steadily and see it whole," as she put it in her paraphrasing of Matthew Arnold.[8] The apparent compromises and contradictions that made her appear conservative can also be seen as attempts to "construct fields of co-existence rather than fields of battle," and her persistent exhortations for a fairer distribution of wealth and the elimination of the power of monopoly capitalism locate her within the boundaries of Said's definition of an intellectual. Spence's value as an intellectual citizen in Australia's cultural, social and political development transcends the period in which she lived. Her vision of how to achieve the good society through her use of journalism, utopian fiction and social and historical realism reflects a number of the links in the history of ideas that connect the past with the present and Australia with the rest of the world.

[8] See p. 111 of this thesis.

Bibliographical note

I have included in the bibliography all the material which I found useful in the writing of this thesis. This does not necessarily include all of Spence's writing, nor all the contemporary commentary published about her. Some of her articles were published in more than one newspaper, but I have included only one reference.

For a more comprehensive bibliography of Spence's work and of contemporary reporting about her, see Barbara Wall's bibliography on the State Library of South Australia's website. As Wall notes in her "Compiler's Notes," many of her newspaper articles were published anonymously, making authorship problematic. The collections of cuttings which Wall used as guides are not always reliable because they also include articles obviously not written by Spence. Articles listed in this bibliography are those which I am convinced were written by Spence on the basis of research by Lesley Ljungdahl, Susan Magarey, Helen Thomson and Wall, as well as my own research and knowledge of Spence's writing style and interests. Where I have been in doubt about authorship, I omitted any reference to that article.

Spence published monthly reviews in the *Register* of British and some Australian periodicals from 1878 until at least 1884, and possibly until 1893. I have read a large number of these but have not cited them in the thesis, mainly because it is difficult to separate her opinion from that of the original author. Information on these can be found in Wall's bibliography.

<u>Place of publication of periodicals and newspapers referred to:</u>

The Age	Melbourne
The Athenaeum	London
The Australasian	Melbourne
The Australian Woman's Sphere	Melbourne
Bulletin	Sydney
Centennial Magazine	Melbourne and Sydney

Cornhill Magazine	London
Brisbane Courier	Brisbane
Daily Telegraph	Sydney
Daily Telegraph	Adelaide
Evening Journal	Adelaide
Fraser's Magazine	London
Harper's New Monthly Magazine	New York
Herald (Labor and Democratic Organ of South Australia)	Adelaide
Leader	Melbourne
Melbourne Review	Melbourne
Adelaide Observer	Adelaide
Queenslander	Brisbane
Quiz and the Lantern	Adelaide
South Australian Register	Adelaide.
Saturday Review	London
The Spectator	London
Sydney Mail	Sydney
Sydney Morning Herald	Sydney
Table Talk	Melbourne
The Times	London
Victorian Review	Melbourne
The Voice	Adelaide
The Worker	Sydney

<u>Abbreviations</u>

ML MSS	Mitchell Library Manuscripts
SLSA	State Library of South Australia
SLV	State Library of Victoria

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