HE epitome of the New Woman movement for many of her contemporaries, Sarah Grand (Frances McFall, 1854–1943) gained much of her notoriety for her unusually frank discussions of venereal diseases and of the effects of British colonial officers’ promiscuity on their wives’ health. She was praised by the liberal-minded for pushing this important topic into women’s and the public’s perception and thus continuing the work begun earlier by Josephine Butler and other feminist campaigners against the Contagious Diseases Acts and the sexual double standard in Victorian society. Conservative opponents, on the other hand, censured Grand for discussing sexual and other “immoral” topics, which presumably might undermine the high standards of British culture and eventually bring it closer to the “degenerate” cultures of “corrupt” societies like the French. For instance, in his 1894 article “The Strike of a Sex,” published anonymously in Quarterly Review, the Reverend William Barry attacked Grand’s famous novel The Heavenly Twins for its allegedly extremist views. Appraising the novel as “aboriginal” and as exhibiting “the savage element glorified by Diderot,” this reviewer joined numerous other critics who dismissed New Woman practices as endangering the place of the “English race” at the top of the evolutionary pyramid and thus also endangering the future of the British Empire.
My examination of racial and colonial issues in Grand’s life and writing, however, suggests that rather than undermining the imperial status quo, the author was herself personally invested in the maintenance of the empire. As wife of Lieutenant Colonel David Chambers McFall, Grand spent several years (in the 1870s) living overseas among British officers and their families. Already prior to her marriage and travels, Grand had become an enthusiastic supporter5 of Butler’s campaigns against gender discrimination as inscribed into the existing governmental attempts to force women suspected of prostitution to undergo medical examinations (while leaving infected men unchecked)6 in efforts to control the epidemic of venereal diseases among the armed forces.7 If she was familiar with this issue as a young girl, it was during her life in the colonies as an army doctor’s wife that Grand became fully aware of British officers’ promiscuity and of the health risks posed by their lifestyle to their wives.8 To share her knowledge with other women became the goal and content of Grand’s feminism. Her feminist consciousness was, at the same time, informed by her growing sense of privilege as a highly positioned British colonial housewife, living a life of luxury and enjoying the social position derived from her husband’s senior rank. Although Teresa Mangum has remarked that Grand’s unconventionality was sure to turn her life as a military wife into a “particularly miserable” experience,9 Gillian Kersley suggests that there was much about her life as an “incorporated wife”10 that Grand enjoyed and that placed her in a position of privilege. “[Grand] obviously delighted in pulling rank,” Kersley writes, commenting on an entry from Grand’s friend’s diary: “As wife of a senior officer . . . she took precedence over women much older than herself.” Of course, it all thrilled and excited her. The baby, Archie, proved no problem with Chinese amahs and an English nurse to care for him, and she whirled from one country to another setting up house, supervising servants and still finding plenty of time to observe local customs and behavior and to toss off little stories.”11

A long list of McFall’s distinctions in his service as a British military doctor testifies to his own implication in imperial history. Before marrying Frances, he had already distinguished himself during the Indian Mutiny by dealing with outbreaks of cholera among colonial soldiers.12 Since the high mortality rate of British troops in the colonies was to a great extent due to preventable tropical diseases such as cholera or yellow fever rather than war casualties,13 McFall’s role as an army surgeon—supervising and enforcing sanitation—was crucial to the success of British colonialism. Although Grand later grew detached from her husband, eventually leaving him (and their, by then grown, son) to forge a career as independent writer
for herself, there are no indications that she rejected the roles required of her as a colonial wife. Instead, she seems to have fulfilled her colonial duties—supervising servants, representing appropriately British culture and its values, and assisting her husband in upholding the ideological structures that reinforced beliefs in European superiority and made the success of the imperialist project possible. Her life abroad, experienced from a privileged white upper-class position, seems to have furnished Grand with no personal motivation to denounce the institution of British colonialism.

This chapter investigates the ways in which Grand’s personal interest in the maintenance of the British Empire, her complicity with late-Victorian evolutionary discourse, and her adoption of some conventions of domestic fiction intertwined her feminist objectives with Britain’s imperial agenda and, in the end, impaired the model of feminism constructed in her work. Developing Lyn Pykett’s observations concerning Grand’s mobilization of the contemporary dominant evolutionary discourse in order to legitimize the New Woman project,14 I argue that the subversiveness of Grand’s feminism was diminished by the emphasis that her writing placed on racial, social, and cultural purity (dictated to the author by the contemporary dominant discourses and by the requirements of her position as a British upper-middle-class colonial wife). As Ann Heilmann has argued convincingly about Grand and other New Women writing in the 1890s, Grand’s more feminized and moderate kind of feminism was also likely tactical, resulting from her strategic effort to distance her characters from the pathologized, decadent New Woman caricature proliferated by the movement’s detractors.15 As a result of these influences and pressures, rather than developing a feminist discourse that would be inclusive of all women and would challenge dominant social structures, Grand (particularly in her most popular novel, The Heavenly Twins) shaped a feminist narrative centered on the ideal of a white English upper-class woman. Grand’s model of the New Woman retains the traditional role of the Victorian woman in her guarding of racial and class purity while guaranteeing the preservation of the existing status of the English nation and the British Empire.

GRAND AND EVOLUTIONARY DISCOURSE

Introducing the first two volumes of The Heavenly Twins (1893) with quotes from Charles Darwin, Grand leaves no doubts that her work was meant as a contribution to the Victorian evolutionary discourse. The first
quote cited by Grand expresses Darwin’s opinion that “education and environment produce only a small effect on the mind of anyone, and that most of our qualities are innate.” In accord with the second part of this argument, Grand presents most of her characters’ childhood talents, strengths, and weaknesses as inherent rather than acquired. Still, her novels also question Darwin’s biological determinism since they all portray education and life circumstances as having an enormous impact upon women—as either thwarting women’s inherent talents or encouraging their full development.

Somewhat reminiscent of William Wordsworth, Grand’s novels present characters of unusually talented girls and young women, distinguished and marked by their extraordinary intellectual faculties. For instance, the reader is told that as a child, Evadne, the central character in *The Heavenly Twins*, learned naturally and with no extra effort on her part: “Her faculty was sufficient to enable her to acquire [information] without troubling herself or anybody else... It was as if she only required to be reminded of things she had learnt before” (3). In concordance with Darwin, Grand seems to argue that Evadne’s qualities of intellect are congenital, a result of centuries of evolution: “Ages of education, ages of hereditary preparation had probably gone to the making of such a mind” (3). Similarly, the protagonist of *The Beth Book* (1897) is repeatedly throughout the novel described as a girl of unusual insight and intelligence, capable of comprehending “the possibility of something beyond.” Nevertheless, all of Grand’s women characters undergo transformations owing to the pressures of their environments, and it is for the worse rather than for the better that they change. The more they are subjected to what was generally considered by Grand’s contemporaries a “proper” feminine upbringing, the worse off their personal fortunes turn out in the course of the narrative. Grand’s objective in creating remarkably talented and intelligent women characters thus seems to have been to point out the crippling effects that the currently available gender-prescribed choices and experiences of perfunctory education, stifling environment, and limited career options had upon even the best-equipped among them.

Angelica, the least encumbered and the arguably most successfully self-realized woman character in *The Heavenly Twins*, becomes so as a result of her insistence on receiving the same education as her twin brother. Still, conventional femininity finally catches up with Angelica when she grows up. Faced with paralyzing boredom due to a lack of professional opportunities available to her, she experiments with cross-dressing but is eventually “cured” of her experimentations by her presumably ideal marriage to a
much older husband. Evadne, another character in this novel, managed, as a young girl, to escape the conventional feminizing education, dismissed social practices of women’s objectification, and became distinguished for always being an agent in every situation. Nevertheless, she eventually becomes diminished in her adult life—transformed into a passive and apathetic woman and hysterical patient—through her stultifying marriage to the morally corrupt Colonel Colquhoun. Starting off as a bright young woman with numerous aspirations and sharp faculties, Evadne ends up as a conventional housewife and mother who shuns social life and refuses to speak or even think about issues of women’s emancipation. From her beginnings as a girl who comes to the conclusion that “withholding education from women was the original sin of man” (23) and who says to her mother that “we are not the property of our husbands; they do not buy us” (116), Evadne grows (or rather deteriorates) into a woman haunted by her imagination, eventually resorting to ask her second husband to burn all her books and take her life into his hands:

All my endeavor is not to think. Let me live on the surface of life, as most women do. I will do nothing but attend to my household duties and the social duties of my position. I will read nothing that is not first weeded by you of every painful thought that might remind me. I will play with my baby by day and curl up comfortably beside you at night. (672)

Grand frames Evadne’s decline by evolutionary rhetoric. While initially Evadne frequently speaks about women’s duty to educate men and save the “English race” in terms of gradual evolution, her final refusal to dwell on the issue of women’s emancipation is explained by her having grown impatient with the slow evolutionary progress and by her alarm over the potentials of revolution as the only other option: “I have no patience with slow processes; ‘Revolution’ would be my cry, and I would preside with an awful joy at the execution of those who are making the misery now for succeeding generations” (672). Instead of allowing her character to experiment with the revolutionary alternative and creating a revolutionary feminist discourse, Grand’s narrative strips Evadne of agency, shutting her down into a hysterical space of prelinguistic silence and fantasy, crocheting, child rearing, and husband attending.

Whereas Evadne and Angelica manage at first to avoid gendered education and become affected deleteriously by the conventional requirements on their behavior only later in their lives, Edith, another central character in The Heavenly Twins, receives what is considered “proper” education for
a woman from her early childhood. Edith, the bishop's only daughter, is at the beginning of the narrative described as “their white child, their pearl . . . a lovely specimen of a well-bred English girl” (155). As I will demonstrate in more detail later in this chapter, whiteness is employed by Grand throughout her writing as a fetishized sign of high social and moral status. It implies Edith's purity and her presumed suitability for rearing “superior” English stock. While Evadne and Edith face the same challenge in their relationships to their syphilitic husbands, Evadne's “unfeminine” medical knowledge, which informs her decision to avoid sexual intercourse with her first husband, manages, the narrative suggests, to save her life. Edith's lack of sexual education and her unquestioned trust in her parents' decisions, on the other hand, leave her unprotected in her marriage to the syphilitic Sir Mosley and doom her to insanity and death. Her child, along with the child of her husband's French mistress (both of them mentally retarded and thus bearing a symbolic mark of their father's moral corruption), remain alive—as reminders of the potential deterioration of the “English race” unless the best of its women take its future into their hands.

Grand's preoccupation with the effects of syphilis18 and with hysteria suggests the impact on the author of both the debates about the Contagious Diseases Acts (still continuing throughout the 1890s even after the acts had been repealed19) and, more generally, of the contemporary theories of evolutionary psychology and medicine.20 The growing economic uncertainty in Britain and the increased colonial rivalry from Germany in the late nineteenth century exacerbated the already existing British upper- and middle-class anxieties that their “imperial race” was being gradually undermined from within (through contact with the working class) as well as from without (through contact with people in the colonies) and that racial and cultural degeneration might follow.21 As discussed in the Introduction, evolutionary discourse was commonly deployed by late-Victorian authors in order to both rationalize these concerns and suggest ways of sustaining Britain's colonial domination without endangering privileged British social groups. By the 1890s, Darwin's theories of the evolution of the species had been developed by his followers into what Anne McClintock (similar to Michel Foucault) has called “scientific racism”: a narrative of social and racial ranking that placed the British white middle- and upper-class heterosexual men at the pinnacle of the evolutionary pyramid, with women from the same social location following and all other races and classes lagging behind.22

Robert Young has problematized the generally accepted view today that the idea of “amalgamation” (hybridization, miscegenation) was over-
whelmingly dismissed by Victorian evolutionists as necessarily leading to racial degeneration. Instead, Young has pointed out, the English, in their response to their newly unified and increasingly aggressive German colonial rivals (who liked to represent themselves as pure Teutons), “flaunt[ed] their hybridity as an English virtue.” Doing so, they leaned on the earlier theories of Herbert Spencer who considered cultural hybridization in generally positive terms, representing Britain as an “example of a culture which had actually progressed through racial amalgamation.” Young intriguingly and persuasively argues that what we find underneath the Victorian texts’ usual covert insistence on purity and homogeneity is an obstinate desire for otherness and an obsession with the idea of amalgamation. Still, as far as white upper-class Victorian women, future mothers of the next English upper-class generation (the type of women featured in Grand’s writing), are concerned, McClintock’s line of argument that cultural and racial mixing was dismissed as undesirable for the privileged social groups still stands. Grand, specifically, appears to have been engaged mostly with the theories of those Victorian evolutionists who condemned racial and social hybridization as leading to the degeneration of what were considered the “supreme races.” The late-Victorian psychological discourse, on which Grand’s writing heavily draws, was greatly implicated in the propurity theories. Victorian evolutionist medical authorities sexualized insanity and nervous disorders, regarded them in terms of evolutionary regression, and suggested interconnections between (women’s) promiscuous sexuality, mental maladies, and racial degeneration of the nation. As Elaine Showalter has observed, syphilis, as a contagious venereal disease which often ended in mental paralysis and which was believed to be hereditary, was frequently invoked in medical discourse to support arguments linking promiscuous sexuality to moral and mental regression of the race. It was feared that a transmission and spread of moral, mental, and physical “degeneration” might lead to the ultimate fall of the British Empire and the extinction of the English nation. Segregation of the healthy (and morally upright) population from the sick (and morally corrupt), combined with selective breeding (eugenics), was considered by psychological and medical authorities as an effective way of preventing this feared decay.

As scholars engaged in research into the genealogy of British feminism have acknowledged, Victorian women writers were not unaffected by these pseudoscientific evolutionary theories, as they frequently placed their narratives within this dominant ideological framework to justify their feminist arguments. They often endeavored to transform the accepted concept of the evolutionary pyramid by valorizing some of its hitherto negative terms.
(specifically female gender), while, nevertheless, retaining and inheriting its racial biases and contradictions. In this respect, Grand is no exception. Invoking Darwin’s hesitant contemplation of the argument that “during late ages, the mind will have been modified more than the body and the struggle between the races of man would have depended entirely on intellectual and moral qualities,” Grand presents moral integrity as an attribute essential for the further evolution of the English race, while bestowing the task of maintaining high moral qualities onto English upper-class women. The mythology of progress and degeneration is thus appropriated in Grand’s discourse for the purposes of (upper-class) women’s emancipation. Women are established here as the vanguard (if not agents) of the advancement of the English nation, and the necessity of the proposed changes in women’s schooling and in men’s sexual behavior is explained by being indispensable preconditions for the further progress of the nation.

Grand accepted the evolutionary medical authorities’ validation of the popular assumption that outward defects and deformities were visible signs of inward and invisible faults. However, while the dominant medical discourse, written as it was from a male perspective, urged men to scrutinize their future wives for indications of degeneracy, Grand inverted the practice and rewrote these theories from a woman’s perspective. This narrative strategy has been highlighted by other Grand scholars, most notably by Angelique Richardson, who has pointed out that as a social purist, Grand “sought to reverse the androcentric bias of [Darwinian] sexual selection, reinvesting women with the agency of selection on the grounds that only they were sufficiently race-aware to make responsible sexual choices.”

The author of The Heavenly Twins instructs her women readers to inspect their future husbands for signs of moral corruption that could presumably have tragic effects on their own health and the health of their children. For instance, it was the physical appearance of Edith’s fiancé, Sir Mosley, that gave Evadne her first unfavorable impression of his moral integrity. In the words of the narrator, “[H]is nose was good, but his eyes were very small, peery, and too close together, and his head shelved backward like an ape’s” (178). Evadne’s first impression of Sir Mosley, based on his features, which are discursively simianized to indicate his moral and physical decay, proves to be all too correct after he has infected Edith and their child with syphilis and has caused Edith’s death. Letting Edith die after having consummated her marriage with Sir Mosley, while rewarding Evadne, who resisted her desire for her first (promiscuous and syphilitic) husband, with a happy marriage to Dr. Galbraith, her second husband, makes Grand’s message...
quite clear. Her advice to women regarding their contact with promiscuous (potentially syphilitic) men is quite in keeping with contemporary scientific theories of the segregation of the sick from the healthy, except that Grand mobilizes these theories for the needs of English domestic women rather than men.

Adopting the popular theories and fears of the potential evolutionary regression, Grand suggests that their inadequate schooling and their marriages to immoral (and thus, in Grand’s narrative, “inferior”) men confront women with influences that virtually guarantee their eventual deterioration. The mere association with Colquhoun on an everyday basis threatens to corrupt Evadne, and it is implied that her later mental deterioration is the result of this contact: “What she suffered from was simply contact with an inferior moral body, and the intellectual starvation inevitable in constant association with a mind too shallow to contain any sort of mental sustenance for the sharing” (220). Similarly, the protagonist of Grand’s *The Beth Book* remains anxiously vigilant for signs of her own corruption by her husband’s coarse language and manners and by his professional contact with patients of a lock hospital he supervises. Also, Ideala, a character in Grand’s earliest novel, loathes her morally corrupt and abusive husband for “taking her down with him” (187). Since women are the mothers of the next generation, the wrongs done to them through the prevalent stultifying education, unfulfilling careers, and relationship with morally dubious husbands become, in Grand’s narrative, also wrongs done to the entire nation. The Victorian reader is thus presented with a persuasive picture: unless English upper-class women are guaranteed an unhindered development of their presumably naturally superior qualities, combined with a free choice in selecting their husbands, they will morally, mentally, and physically deteriorate, and the empire will decline along with them.

While it might be difficult to determine whether Grand initially developed her rhetorical strategies deliberately in order to justify her and other women’s desire for more agency in their lives or whether it rather sprang from her genuine concern for the English nation, the analysis that follows later on in this chapter suggests that Grand’s feminist agenda became eventually subordinated in her writing to the imperial interests of Britain, which Grand adopted for her own. Drawing on the discourse of evolution and progress and shifting its meanings in order to develop a new mythology that would be centered on women, Grand’s feminist project not only inherited the imperialist ideology and racial bias of this dominant discourse but was in the end actually curbed by it in its development. Evadne’s story and her final hysteria, examined later in this chapter, provide the
most apparent examples of the types of constraints that Grand's entanglement with the pro-imperialist evolutionist narrative put on the development of the author's feminist discourse. As a more general example of the check her imperialist investment placed on Grand's feminism, the female characters' experiences with intolerable marriages (explored repeatedly in Grand's novels) never become grounds for their rejection of the institution of matrimony. The women's conviction that, compared to other alternatives, marriage is the best option for English civilization turns out to be more consequential than their own tragic experiences as wives. As Beth articulates it for herself and for Grand's other women characters:

I know that ‘holy matrimony’ is often a state of absolute degradation, especially for the woman, but all the same I think the legal bond is best. It is a safeguard to the family and a restraint on the unprincipled . . . anything else is bad for the individual, for the family, for the state. As civilization, as evolution advances from lower to the higher, we find it makes more and more for monogamy. Our highest types of men and women are monogamous. (BB, 473)

TRADITIONS OF DOMESTIC FICTION IN GRAND’S WRITING

Of course, Grand's preference for the institution of marriage also stems from the traditions of domestic fiction she inherited as a Victorian woman novelist. Although partly transgressing the requirements of domestic fiction (the major popularizer of Victorian femininity), Grand to a great extent located her writing within this literary tradition, utilizing for her purposes its convention to instruct through entertainment but also inheriting some of its limits. As Nancy Armstrong has observed, domestic fiction sought to separate the “private” discourse of sexual relations from the “public” discourse of socioeconomic politics (and thus to secure sexual issues for the domain of women's writing).32 The New Woman movement, with its insistence on presenting sexual relations explicitly as a political issue and on moving sex outside the “private sphere,” would seem to wish to break with traditions of domestic fiction in this respect. Grand's The Heavenly Twins, while considered by many the model New Woman novel, does not, however, follow this trend. Confining the action of her narrative to an upper-class sphere, whose women have no financial need to work, Grand avoided bringing sexual politics to the world of labor and economic conflicts. Her narrative remains confined within the domestic sphere.
According to Armstrong, nineteenth-century domestic fiction was distinguished by its democratizing direction; it represented the middle-class woman (rather than the aristocratic woman) as desirable, and it popularized bourgeois values. Grand's ideal fictional community in *The Heavenly Twins*, however, clearly represents aristocracy. Grand here seeks to promote the aristocratic code of behavior as the ideal and to revitalize and then resecure the empowerment of the English upper class. Lower classes are generally represented in *The Heavenly Twins* as vulgar and promiscuous, although on several occasions, bourgeois utilitarianism is contemplated as acceptable and useful. This latter trend is further reinforced in *The Beth Book*, which marks the author's eventual recognition of the diminished influence of aristocracy and follows the tradition of Victorian domestic fiction with its advocacy of middle-class values of self-reliance. In *The Heavenly Twins*, however, even while recognizing on several occasions that gentry, with their high-bred reserve and manners, are doomed, Grand still clings to this class, distinguishing its women with the characteristic most prized by her: self-restraint. The three central women characters in the novel, all drawn sympathetically, are defined by their genteel manners and their upper-class social location. Evadne, as the daughter of a country gentleman, identifies from her childhood onward with the upper class. The characters from one of the books she read are described by her as "petty tradespeople . . . respectable in their own position, but hardly lovely according to our ideas" (17). Concerning characters from yet another book, Evadne observes: "vulgar, ill-bred, lower-class people. Objectionable to contemplate from every point of view. But a book should enlighten the class whom it describes on the subject of their own bad manners. We don't nag" (18). Angelica's and Edith's identification with the upper class is as pronounced as Evadne's. All three of them eventually marry men with aristocratic titles; in fact, Dr. Galbraith is conveniently knighted just before he proposes to Evadne. And even in the more middle-class-oriented *The Beth Book*, the hero of Beth's daydreams is a knight, and the novel closes with Beth's real-life hero, the American artist Arthur Brock, returning to her, riding on a horse and compared by the narrator to a knight. Although Brock is not a member of English gentry, his aristocratic status is still maintained on the level of imagination.

As Armstrong has argued convincingly, one of the major characteristics of domestic fiction is its use of marriage between characters to comment on compatibility of social classes. Although Grand provides numerous examples of unhappy matrimony and thus seemingly transgresses this custom of domestic fiction, an analysis of her representations of dys-
functional marriages suggests that these were depicted primarily for the purpose of commenting on the incompatibility of certain social classes and only secondarily to question the suitability of the institution for women. Similar to Jane Austen’s work (Austen is mentioned in Grand’s novels several times with reverence), when Grand’s women characters finally do find suitable partners, their marriage brings a solution not only to their private conflicts but also to political problems in the public sphere. In The Heavenly Twins, ideal marriage stabilizes the aristocratic community by bringing together upper-class partners who are dedicated to monogamy and to the task of breeding a healthy population. Evadne is not only mentally but also financially impoverished by her first marriage to an Irish promiscuous husband, and the proposal of the rich and morally upright (and by now also knighted) Dr. Galbraith saves her from becoming a middle-class woman. At the same time, as the tragic story of Edith implies, not all of the gentry are considered by Grand as ideal candidates for marriage. In contradistinction to decadent gentry with promiscuous habits, the aristocracy promoted by Grand is a new kind of aristocracy, revitalized by the New Woman movement and dedicated to monogamy.

In the tradition of domestic fiction, economic and racial problems faced by the British Empire at the fin de siècle are relocated by Grand from the socioeconomic to the domestic space and then made to disappear in a harmonious marriage between socially and morally compatible partners. What disappears as well is women characters’ desire to transgress the domestic sphere and to seek more fulfilling careers outside of their traditional roles as mothers and wives. Evadne’s initial act of disobedience (when she refuses to consummate her marriage to Colquhoun) seems to break with the more prevalent traditions of domestic fiction, threatening the very basis of the paternalistic symbolic system based on the exchange of women in which women do not intervene. However, Grand’s violation of the conventions of domestic fiction is here merely temporary, and, furthermore, Evadne’s transgression of femininity is here legitimized by Colquhoun’s being promiscuous and also Irish. Measured through the lens of the Victorian evolutionary discourse in which the Irish were generally portrayed as an inferior race to the English (see the next chapter on a more detailed discussion of the representation of the Irish in late-Victorian literature and cartoons), the mix of his promiscuity and Irishness would make Colquhoun doubly “inferior.” Such a husband clearly did not offer the best “blood” for Evadne’s fulfillment of her expected function as a mother of the next English “imperial race” anyway. When she finally finds a morally upright and socially compatible partner and gives birth to
a healthy son, she happily accepts her husband as the agent of her life.

DISCOURSE OF HYSTERIA IN GRAND’S WORK

While adopting the arguments of Darwinian physicians concerning syphilis (as leading to personality changes and as having hereditary effects on the next generation), and basing the characters of Sir Mosley and Colonel Colquhoun on the model outlined in Victorian psychiatric literature, Grand struggled with the prominent sexual explanations of hysteria in evolutionary psychiatry. The late-Victorian debate concerning hysteria was characterized by a clash between feminist advocates of women’s higher education and Darwinian social scientists (such as the already mentioned Henry Maudsley) who opposed it, the latter using hysteria to support their claims that emancipated women’s unsatisfied sexual and maternal drives would produce injuries to their reproductive systems and brains, leading the race into extinction.34 Given Grand’s preoccupation with the health of future English generations, the opinions of Darwinists must have been perceived by her as serious charges. She was probably also attracted to their reasoning because it coincided with her conviction that a nuclear family—with woman in the key role of mother—is the best option for civilization’s continuation. On the other hand, her own desire for intellectual and creative realization drew Grand closer to the feminist opponents of the sexual explanations of women’s nervous disorders. Grand used her work to explore the reasoning of both sides. The arguments of evolutionary psychiatrists that hysteria results from women’s presumably overly ambitious attempts to defy their biological disposition in their pursuit of intellectual occupations and that hysteria can be cured by marriage and maternity are voiced by Beth’s husband-physician in The Beth Book, as well as by the sympathetically drawn Dr. Galbraith, Evadne’s physician and second husband, in The Heavenly Twins. The issue of hysteria and the related issue of the attraction between the hysterical patient and the psychiatrist (later to be called transference and countertransference) are also probed in Ideala (1888) and in Grand’s short story “Janey, a Humble Administrator.”35

Grand herself was treated for neurasthenia later in her life (in 1903).

While Grand seems to have accepted celibacy as one possible cause of women’s hysteria, she rejected the popular derogatory representations of hysterical women, portraying them instead in a more sympathetic light. In this respect, The Heavenly Twins presaged the direction to be taken two years later by Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud’s influential Studies on Hysteria, which would challenge the common hostile view of hysterical patients.
as mentally deficient, malicious, and selfish, offering instead more empathetic portraits of hysterical women. Furthermore, Grand explored other possible causes of women’s nervous disorders. Similar to Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her famous “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), Grand suggested that rather than being induced by their creative and intellectual occupation, hysterical symptoms result from social restrictions on women’s creativity. Grand’s narrative makes it clear, for instance, that Ideala’s mental condition (resembling hysteria) is not an outcome of her pursuit of intellectual interests, but a response to her husband’s emotional and physical abuse. Significantly, Ideala is cured of her hysteria by traveling in China, reflecting the trend among actual Victorian emancipated women to explore the imperial frontiers for new, more satisfactory definitions of womanly behavior. Similarly, in The Heavenly Twins, Evadne’s mental and physical condition remains unimpaired by her ardent pursuit of serious studies as a child. In fact, it is implied that Evadne’s intellectual preoccupations helped to keep her healthy during the dangerous time of growing up. Her hysterical symptoms begin to develop only after she promises to her first husband that she will refrain from publicly speaking and writing on women’s issues as long as he is alive. This promise prevents Evadne from joining her friends’ efforts to publicize the potential effects of syphilis on infected men’s wives, and eventually turns her active life to crippling inertia:

Up to this time, Evadne in her home life had been serene and healthy minded. But now suddenly there came a change. She began to ask: Why should she trouble herself? Nobody who had a claim upon her wished her to do anything but dress well and make herself agreeable. . . . What was her duty? Clearly to acquiesce as everybody was doing. . . . This was the first consequence of her promise to Colonel Colquhoun. It had cramped her into a narrow groove wherein to struggle would only have been to injure herself ineffectually. . . . Evadne had been formed for a life of an active usefulness; but now she found herself reduced to an existence of objectless contemplation. . . . She gave up reading; and by degrees there grew upon her a perfect horror of disturbing emotions. (349)

Refused an outlet, Evadne deteriorates. Denied access to the symbolic language, she develops an alternative nonverbal system of expression through hysterical symptoms. Considering that mental malady represented to Grand’s readers an evolutionary reversal, a developmental regression, the author’s depiction of Evadne’s hysteria translates into an effective
expression of her condemnation of a society that brings the best of its generation down instead of giving them a chance to fulfill their potential.

Twentieth-century feminist scholars working in the field of psychoanalysis vary in their appraisal of the revolutionary potential of hysteria (language of the body) as women's alternative to symbolic verbal language. Engaging with the arguments of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan, feminists either claim hysteria for women, appreciating the hysteric's efforts to express female excess through her body, or they alternately dismiss it, emphasizing the limits of this kind of expression and arguing that hysterics are bound by their symptoms, that they fail to produce structural changes in the symbolic system. Accepting Lacan's distinction between the patriarchal symbolic and the female imaginary, Hélène Cixous, for instance, argues that since women's strong identification with their mothers and a consequently less definite end of their pre-oedipal phase enable them to maintain a close relationship with the imaginary, they have the potential to express desire directly through their bodies without necessarily entering the symbolic language. Hysteria is regarded by Cixous as a subversive attempt to “speak” the imaginary in a way that would not be controlled by the symbolic “Law of the Father.” Catherine Clement, on the other hand, while agreeing with Cixous that women can express themselves symbolically outside of the patriarchal symbolic system, dismisses the idea of there being revolutionary potential in the language of hysteria. For Clement (as with Lacan), hysteria is a culturally stylized channel into which excess flows only to be annihilated by the society that drove it in such direction in the first place.

Similar to Lacan's and Cixous' discourses, in Evadne's story, the symbolic seems connected with the paternal rather than the maternal. There is no oedipal mother, in Kaja Silverman's sense of the term, but only the more conventional figure of the oedipal father—Evadne enters the symbolic by acquiring knowledge of history, philosophy, and sciences from her father and from books, and her religious faith from the Bible. If the symbolic order in Grand's narrative coincides with verbal language (from which Evadne is later excluded by the promise to her husband) controlled in the late nineteenth century by the evolutionary discourse, to what extent does Grand manage to portray Evadne's hysterical symptoms as an alternative language outside the dominant symbolic order? Does Evadne's hysteria become in Grand's narrative the subversive language of women's rejection of the patriarchal order, as described by Cixous, or is Evadne rather bound by the constraints of her hysterical symptoms—in line with Lacan's and Clement's arguments?
Cixous’ revolutionary female imaginary, which would presumably avoid the control of the patriarchal symbolic system, presupposes women’s exploration of the heterogeneity, excess, and multiplicity of their sexualities. Evadne, however, is prevented from doing so by Grand’s evolutionary narrative that inscribes self-restraint to her character. In a way, Evadne’s decision to keep her word (however destructive for her it may be) and refrain from speaking on the only issue she finds worth discussing might appear inconsistent with her character, given her earlier decision not to sacrifice herself to “save Colquhoun’s soul.” Still, to keep her promise is in fact in line with Evadne’s one distinguishing characteristic—her self-restraint. Grand on numerous occasions comments on Evadne’s strong will and self-discipline. These were also the features regarded by evolutionist psychologists as characteristic of the most morally advanced individuals. As Showalter has observed, late Victorians posited a hierarchy of mental, intellectual, and emotional faculties, in which strong will and self-control were considered the ultimate level of development both in the evolution of the individual and in the evolution of the race. Evadne’s self-control, which includes the ability to keep her promise whatever it takes, was intended in Grand’s narrative as a sign and evidence of her superiority over her husband. English upper–class women’s moral and spiritual superiority was the central thesis of Grand’s narrative, deployed by her to argue women’s right to lead and save the English nation and the empire from degeneration. Evadne thus becomes trapped by the constraints of Grand’s narrative. While breaking her promise would enable her to speak on women’s issues, it would also dismantle the basis for her moral distinction from her husband and endanger Grand’s argument. Evadne’s hysteria is thus dictated by the requirements of the evolutionary discourse rather than sidestepping it. Keeping the binding promise also cripples Evadne’s abilities to become a spokesperson on issues of women’s emancipation and jeopardizes Grand’s feminist agenda.

Thus while succeeding at challenging the common view on hysteria’s etiology, Grand did not manage to advance Evadne as an ideal model for the women’s movement. Evadne—the subject and agent, the New Woman—is sacrificed for Evadne—the mother of the future English generation—and her role as the leader of women desiring to transgress the domestic sphere gives way to the conventional role as mother bound entirely and completely to the private sphere. The glimpse of Evadne in Grand’s later novel The Beth Book—portrayed now as having fulfilled and realized her domestic/national duties of finding a proper husband and becoming a mother—shows her as still shunning appearances in public...
and as being utterly confined within the domestic space. Although Grand skillfully uses Evadne’s hysteria to argue her case for women’s higher education and meaningful occupations, her character is first forced to suppress her sexuality, body, and desires in order to prove herself worthy within the symbolic evolutionary discourse. In Grand’s narrative, Evadne’s hysteria thus does not become Cixous’ revolutionary language of the imaginary. Although at first enjoying her daydreams and fantasies (identified by Galbraith as hysterical symptoms), they soon come to haunt her, and she seeks professional help from the paternalistic, fatherly doctor. Instead of controlling and perhaps manipulating her hysterical symptoms, she is completely overwhelmed by the requirements for self-constraint of the evolutionary symbolic order, enacting Lacan’s rather than Cixous’ schematic of hysteria. Evadne’s hysteria is after all triggered by her promise to her first husband, the only one she gives him, and it remains controlled by the ascetic ideal with which she is identified in Grand’s narrative.41

FEAR OF LIMINALITY AND BORDER CROSSING IN GRAND’S WRITING

The idea of segregation of the “healthy” from the “polluted” adopted by Grand from Victorian medical discourse does not end in her writing with the suggestion of women’s separation from syphilitic men, but it is applied also to the author’s treatment of contacts between people across social, cultural, and racial differences. Similarly, Grand’s biological determinism does not end with her descriptions of men infected with syphilis. Rather, physical features are frequently invoked by the author as external indicators of her characters’ social and cultural location. Whiteness and delicate features are generally reserved for Grand’s upper-class, monogamous characters, while the lower-class and non-English, particularly French and Irish, characters’ appearance is usually aesthetically devalued and described in terms that would likely suggest cultural or even racial inferiority of these characters to the late-Victorian reader. For instance, the appearance of the middle-class couple whom Evadne meets in Malta, Mr. and Mrs. Brimston, is discursively vulgarized. Major Brimston’s hands are described as “fat and podgy, with short pointed fingers, indicative of animalism and ill-nature, the opposite of all that is refined and beautiful—truly of necessity an offense to [Evadne]” (HT, 205). The slang he and his wife use is dismissed by the narrator as “the scum of language” (HT, 203) and is contrasted with the smooth current of Evadne’s perfect English. The physical
features and language of this couple indicate and determine, in Grand’s narrative, their unpolished manners and low breeding and locate them lower on the evolutionary ladder, providing a foil for Evadne’s “correct” breeding, education, and social location.

As for cross-cultural contacts, limited class transgressions are contemplated by Grand’s characters Angelica and Edith on several occasions in The Heavenly Twins, but they typically are not carried out. Angelica considers halting her aristocratic carriage and offering money to a poor young woman, but by the time she decides to do so, the woman has gone. While she is the most daring woman character in the novel (discovering for the reader the performative character of gender, even enacting in her nocturnal escapades the practice of cross-dressing), Angelica’s social contacts still follow the codes prescribed for her class. After all, even the mysterious companion in her gender transgressions, the Tenor, in the end turns out to be of an “educated race” (426)—just as his delicate features and cultivated voice have been announcing throughout the narrative. And Angelica’s encounter with a French prostitute during one of her adventures (when she is dressed as “the Boy”) would assure the reader that even when cross-dressed, Angelica is not ready to transgress social boundaries. The narrator describes “the Boy’s” disgust when approached on the street by the prostitute:

“Qu’il est beau!” [the prostitute] exclaimed, laying her hand on his arm, and smiling up into his face admiringly. The Boy stepped back to avoid her, with an unmistakable gesture of disgust, and in doing so, he accidentally stumbled up against the Tenor. He turned round, and apologized confusedly. The Tenor raised his hat, and answered courteously. They were standing together side by side now, and remained so for some seconds, silently surveying the scene. (375)

Rather than being invoked for the purpose of dismissing the Victorian double gender standard (as it would have been in Anti-Contagious-Diseases Acts campaign’s texts), prostitution is in this scene mobilized to provide a background for “the Boy’s” first encounter with the Tenor. By not recognizing her cross-dressing, the prostitute serves to verify Angelica’s gender-transgressive abilities, helping disguise her the better for the reader and (temporarily) convincing the reader that, however effeminate, “the Boy” is male. The prostitute also creates a link between “the Boy” and the Tenor by becoming the shared object of their gaze. Furthermore, she is narratively positioned in a way that turns her into the
representative of the “pollution” presumably flowing to Britain from French culture, and in this way, by providing a contrasting pole, she under-
scores the social and cultural similarities between “the Boy” and the Tenor.

In an episode similar to Angelica’s missed opportunity to help a poor woman on the street, Edith and her mother do not stop their carriage to help a pauper woman who is lying unconscious in the ditch with her new-
born child. Instead of risking “contamination” from contact with this unfortunate stranger, they send their servant to inquire about the girl who, nevertheless, in the meantime has disappeared. Interestingly, her decision to refrain from a verbal exchange with this female stranger proves in the end fatal for Edith since the pauper woman turns out to be Sir Mosley’s French mistress who possesses crucial information about his moral and physical corruption. Edith’s (or rather her mother’s) aversion keeps her from obtaining vital news which might have saved her life by discouraging her from marrying Sir Mosley. In contrast with Grand’s more customary criticism of class transgressions, Edith’s decision to keep her distance from the poor girl thus appears here to be censured by the narrator. Her obsession with purity brings Edith eventually to a much closer physical contact with the girl through her intercourse with her husband, whom she shares with the French woman and whose syphilis can be interpreted as repre-
senting both sexual and racial “pollution.” The Englishwoman’s contagion by the stigmatized “blood” of the morally decadent syphilitic man lowers her to the same level (she is now symbolically “impure”) as his French pau-
per lover. While Grand seems to censure Edith’s decision not to speak to the stranger and thus appears to be advocating cross-cultural relations among women, in the broader context of the narrative she does not develop a feminist discourse where differences among women would be freely explored and negotiated. Instead, the limited and controlled verbal contact of women from diverse social locations seems to be proposed here rather provisionally as a way of preventing a more contaminating and uncontrollable interchange—as a way of providing genteel women with knowledge necessary for guarding racial borders more effectively.

To explain the significance of the proposed control of English upper-
class women’s and men’s bodies, Grand’s narrative invokes the two central fetishes of the evolutionist discourse, blood and skin. Rather than the Freudian and Lacanian notion of fetish as a phallus substitute, I here refer to McClintock’s concept of the fetish object as an embodiment of irre-
solvable contradictions on personal and social levels. As McClintock has argued, by displacing contradictions onto a fetish object that can be manipulated, the individual gains symbolic control over what might be
otherwise terrifying ambiguities. Blood, sexualized and racialized (Bram Stoker’s 1897 Dracula is the most prominent example), seems to be one such fetish invoked frequently in late-Victorian literature to manipulate the contradictory duties that colonialism placed on the fin-de-siècle English individual—to colonize, yet, also, to maintain racial and cultural purity and presumed supremacy of the English. On the one hand, extension of the parental “blood lineage” to children was necessary for the continuation of the English nation, while on the other hand, it could become a way of spreading “defectiveness” (believed to be transmitted, much as venereal diseases, by sex, symbolized in Victorian language by blood). The old strategy of endowing Victorian women with the role of border guards, who would limit their sexual contact to their husband, thus ensuring the extension of the proper blood lineage and protecting the English “stock” from being “polluted,” could no longer (in light of the newly popularized knowledge about venereal diseases and heredity) be considered sufficient. In her narrative, Grand adopted the prescription of the traditional evolutionary discourse to control English women’s sexuality, while, at the same time, augmenting it to include men’s sexual contacts as well. English women, as future mothers of the nation, become responsible in Grand’s narrative both for a wise management of their own bodily boundaries and also for inducing English men to become responsible fathers.

Another fetish used in the evolutionist mythology which often reappears in Grand’s work (and is congruous with her biological determinism) is that of skin. As I have mentioned, white complexion is usually invoked by Grand to indicate the character’s high social status by birth and often determines the character’s behavior. The story of the “Tenor,” the foundling whose ancestry remains a mystery, is one example of Grand’s deployment of this fetish in The Heavenly Twins. Although he was abandoned by his apparently genteel parents early in his infancy and, at first, raised by a poor collier, the Tenor’s pale complexion, along with his golden hair, delicate constitution, and divine voice, constantly betrays his aristocratic origins and sets him off from his common surroundings. In Grand’s world, where one’s descent determines one’s place in society and where clothing often fails to be a reliable sign of one’s origins, skin becomes invested with this function. Rather than being performative and learned, in Grand’s narrative social distinctions are inherent, and the color and quality of one’s complexion become the markers of one’s proper class membership.

While Grand insisted on the assumption of fixed and inborn racial and class identities, the fluidity of gender is recognized and even manipulated
by some of her women characters, most explicitly by Angelica. When wearing her first long dress to dinner, the thus far mischievous, dark, and uninhibited Angelica realizes that she has been transformed, that the dress has enforced upon her proper feminine behavior which she finds stifling. Angelica (and with her the reader) becomes aware of the performative nature of femininity and gender in general and later deploys this knowledge both to explore some of her “unfeminine” desires and to manipulate the mysterious Tenor and her husband. She uses men’s clothes to flee the domestic sphere, and, cross-dressed as a boy, she becomes a nightly visitor at the Tenor’s house as his friend. When the Tenor becomes infatuated with Angelica as a woman whom he meets at weekly church services and discusses this infatuation with “the Boy” (Angelica in disguise), cross-dressing provides Angelica with an opportunity to become both a subject and an object of discussions with the Tenor about herself as the desired woman. Nevertheless, instead of using her advantageous position to correct the Tenor’s representation of herself as a woman placed on a pedestal, Angelica-the-Boy only reinforces this picture. Also, the subversive power of cross-dressing is limited only to the nighttime world (another intriguing similarity with Dracula) because during the day Angelica’s femininity would be presumably betrayed by her delicate features. The power of clothes to mark gender is thus clearly subordinate to the power of physical features inscribed directly on the body. Furthermore, Angelica’s cross-dressing and her nocturnal escapades eventually have fatal consequences for the Tenor (just as Lucy’s nighttime transformations almost prove fatal for her suitors in Stoker’s novel) and are censured by the narrator. In the end, cross-dressing thus seems dismissed, and along with it also the idea of fluid gender identity as a model for Grand’s New Woman. Still, in accord with Young’s arguments about the persistent if suppressed obsession with transgression and fluidity in English literature, the notion of fluid gender reappears in Grand’s work again and again, and, although cross-dressing is usually portrayed by her as misguided, its repetitious occurrence suggests its powerful hold over Grand’s imagination.

**COLONIAL SPACE IN THE HEAVENLY TWINS**

As I have argued, Evadne’s, Angelica’s, and Edith’s acceptance of the roles prescribed to them by the white upper-class English version of the imperialist evolutionary discourse turns them into border guards controlling and sealing off the borders between cultures, classes, and also races. The
function of a border guard is perhaps best fulfilled in the novel by the character of Evadne. She not only refuses to consummate her marriage to her promiscuous Irish husband Colquhoun, but also faithfully reinforces, both in Britain and in colonial Malta (where she spends some time with Colquhoun), the social codes that control transcultural contacts. Instead of clashing, intermingling, and producing new hybridities in liminal spaces where they meet, heterogeneous cultures and different classes are prevented from doing so. The groups and individuals considered inferior are kept separated, with Evadne’s zealous assistance, from those regarded superior. According to Dr. Galbraith’s observations, “[Evadne] would associate with none but her equals; and out of those again she was fastidious in the selection of her friends . . . [She] would cut Mrs. Chrimes to the quick just because she had the misfortune to be a tanner’s wife and nobody’s daughter in particular” (557–58). She also, as Dr. Galbraith, the narrator in this section of the novel, assures the reader, “hated the French” (586), who represent (along with the Irish) the prototype of the “degenerate” nation in the novel. As long as Evadne is involved, encounters between diverse classes, genders, and cultures will strictly follow the prescribed codes of behavior, which will ensure that no borders are crossed and no contact zones established.

In Malta, as the wife of a colonial officer, Evadne plays the roles prescribed to the “incorporated wives,” helping to guard and reinforce the social hierarchy within the European community, to build a replica of British society and upper-class home in the colony, and to maintain a distance between the European and Maltese populations. Illustrative of Mary Louise Pratt’s arguments about the “arrival scenes” in travel writing, the scene depicting Evadne’s landing in Malta frames future relations of contact between her and the Maltese:

Colonel Colquhoun pointed out the lighthouses of St. Elmo, patron saint of sailors, on the right, and Ricasoli on the left. Then they were met by a rainbow fleet of dghaisas, gorgeous in colour, and propelled by oarsmen who stood to their work, and were also brightly clad—both boats and boatmen, clothed by the sun, as it were, having blossomed into colour unconsciously as the flowers do in genial atmosphere. The boats, carrying fruits, flowers, tobacco, cheap jewelry, and coarse clothing for sailors, each cargo adding something of picturesqueness to the scene, formed a gay flotilla about the steamer and accompanied her, she towering majestically above them, and appearing to attract them and hold them to her sides as a great cork in the water does a handful of chopped straw. The boatmen
held up their wares, chattering and gesticulating, their sun-embrowned faces all animation and changeful as children’s. One moment they would be smiling up and speaking in wheedling tones to the passengers, and the next they would be frowning round at each other, and resenting some offence with torrents of abuse. So the mail glided into the Grand Harbour, Evadne wondering at the fortifications, and straining her eyes to make out somewhat of the symbols, alternate eye and ear, carved on the old watch tower of St. Angelo. (174)

This scene represents the encounter between the English and the indigenous people as that between a great, prudent, solid, and powerful Queen, admired by picturesque, childlike, and emotional people of an exotic and fragmented nation. The relationship between them is depicted as initiated by the friendly natives, but the decision as to whether or not an actual contact will take place is in the hands of British colonialists. While the native people are portrayed as being anxious to establish reciprocal relations, safe distance is sustained (on this and other occasions) by the British, and the two parties remain in their separate zones. Spatially, Grand’s narrative places Evadne higher, in a position of supremacy, with the native traders being forced to look up to her—reaffirming thus the Victorian reader’s conventional understanding of the hierarchy between the ruling metropolis and the subjected colonies. The Maltese are romanticized and orientalized, conceived of as representing a primordial paradise of emotions, in contrast to the balanced, rational, and civilized British. Although the economic motivation of the native population’s friendly behavior is suggested (perhaps impairing to some extent the idyllic impression of exotic prehistory desired by Grand’s readers), the trade between members of these two nations is represented as an exchange between unequal partners, resembling descriptions of the first barters with primitive tribes in early English conquerors’ narratives, with the English clearly having material advantage on their side. Victorian readers of this passage would perhaps be reminded of the economic benefits brought to them by the existence of their powerful empire and reassured that even at the end of the nineteenth century, British economic dominance over “primitive” nations was as pronounced as it was in the early days of colonization.

The arrival scene captures some anxiety and even fear of the unknown on Evadne’s part. Unable to understand the language of the natives and perceiving them as unpredictable, Evadne seeks comprehensible signs of Western civilization. She finds assurance in the intelligibility of Christian
symbolism and a promise of protection represented by the sight of English garrisons. The rest of Book Two, set in Malta, takes place mostly behind the walls of garrisons, in ballrooms, and on board British army yachts. In fact, Evadne's landing on the island is one of only two scenes in the book that bring the Maltese people into the picture. On both occasions, the Maltese are described from a safe distance, their faces never becoming individualized in the narrative. It soon becomes clear that Grand's purpose in setting part of her novel in a British colony says nothing of an interest in describing the native customs and peoples or the forming of contact zones between them and the British. Instead, the author invokes the Maltese location as a background for her commentaries on the corrupt customs of European colonial society and on the loyalty of the New Woman to the Queen. Quite in line with Margaret Strobel and Vron Ware's observations about fin-de-siècle Western feminism relying to some extent on the unfettered frontier for its expression, the colonial location is invoked in Grand's novel as a site for her explorations of the meaning of New Womanhood. It is in Malta where Evadne first meets emancipated women who refuse their traditional passive roles as drawing-room decorations and pleasant companions for men and who, instead, freely discuss political issues of their own interest. At the same time, however, Grand invokes the colonial background to reassure the reader of the New Woman's loyalty to the British Empire, making it clear that the interests of the empire are the New Woman's first priority and that the direction of her emancipation is fully determined by the nation's colonial needs. Evadne leaves no doubts on this issue as she says proudly to her American friend, Mr. Price: “We are deeply attached to our Royal House, and we can well afford to keep it up” (224). The narrator's comment accompanying this remark suggests a sympathy on the part of the narrator with Evadne's patriotic feelings: “it was this glimpse of the heart of the proud and patriotic little aristocrat, true daughter of a nation great enough to disdain small economies, and not accustomed to do without any luxury to which it is attached, that appealed to Mr. Price” (224).

Since the elite society in the Maltese garrisons is described in The Heavenly Twins as being quite similar to the society of a London season, except that it is under a much closer surveillance from Britain's colonial subjects, the Maltese location enabled Grand to comment pointedly on what she perceived as the flaws of her compatriots through the eyes of those who were expected to look up to them as their models. The British circle in Malta is depicted as being observed by the curious native population, and any abatement in manners and discipline on the part of the
colonists promises to be noted by the natives:

...and the Maltese ruffians with their brown faces and brightly coloured clothing, lying idly about in the sun, or chattering together at the top of their voices in little groups. They had seemed to look at [Evadne], too, with friendly eyes. And she saw the sapphire sea which parted in dazzling white foam from the prow of the boat as they came along... the well-disciplined faces of the men who looked at her shyly, but with the same look which she took to be friendly; and their smart uniforms. She would like to have shaken hands with them all. (189)

This representation of the natives as supposedly friendly, innocent, and disciplined in their shy study of her is contrasted with Evadne’s observations about corrupted manners in the garrisons. There is a vague sense of expectation inscribed into the native faces, reminding Evadne and the reader of the obligation of the British in the colonies to maintain a mystique of superiority of their race and to provide a model of impeccable behavior for the natives. As the reader is soon made to realize, the society Evadne joins in the Maltese garrisons far from lives up to its representative and civilizing role. Accepting the common view that the maintenance of discipline and good manners among the British in the colonies was mostly the responsibility of the wives of colonial officers, Grand’s narrative puts the blame for the lapse in moral codes in the garrisons on gossipy, flirtatious, and trivial middle-class women. Women like Mrs. Brimston, it is implied, are responsible for the corruption of British officers’ social and sexual behavior and, by extension, for the spread of venereal diseases among them and their wives, even for the “contamination” of English racial purity. In contrast with Mrs. Brimston, Grand’s New Woman, however unconventional and independent she might be in some respects, identifies with her social role as a representative and guardian of British upper-class moral codes. Although Evadne comes to be criticized for her social discrimination, this aspect of her behavior, while considered rude by some of Colquhoun’s colleagues, is in fact motivated by her sense of imperial duty. She, the supposedly prototypical New Woman in this part of the novel, accepts her responsibilities as a colonial housewife, fulfilling them more zealously than other women.

As border guard, Evadne works to keep the British and the native cultures separated (whether for the sake of keeping up the appearances of the British as the superior race or for the sake of protecting the “innocent natives” from the corrupt English society). Still, the fact that maintaining
this separation is her duty as a colonial wife does not mean that Evadne's desires “intrinsically” coincide with her colonial duties. There are occasions in the narrative—for instance, the acknowledgment of her impulse to shake the “Maltese ruffians’” hands—which suggest that in order to fulfill her colonial duty, Evadne needs to discipline her desires. The incident of Evadne's admitted wish to shake hands with the natives exemplifies Young’s (already mentioned) argument that despite the sense of Englishness being often represented in British literature in terms of fixity and homogeneity, this representation masks the often unconscious obsession on the part of the English with transgressiveness and otherness. Nevertheless, similar to Edith’s and Angelica’s suppressed impulse to descend their aristocratic carriages and initiate contact with destitute women on the street, Evadne’s desire remains merely contemplated and un-acted-upon. As far as cross-cultural relations are concerned, Grand’s narrative remains a narrative of nonreciprocity and noninteraction.

In her description of the lifestyle of British colonial officers and their wives, Grand drew on her own experiences in the Straits Settlements, Singapore, Ceylon, Japan, China, Hong Kong, and (briefly) Malta. Although her particular choice of Malta as a location for her novel might have been incidental, it could have been also prompted by its special status among Britain’s crown colonies. Unlike most other colonies, Malta was not conquered by force but became part of the British Empire by motivated choice, after the Maltese people sought British protection against their French conquerors during the Napoleon wars. The island of Malta thus served as an example of “British colonialism at its best,” presumably driven not by English greed or aspirations to appropriate foreign places but rather by their supposed custodial generosity implemented at the request of other nations. Although the Maltese decision to seek protection within the British Empire was more likely simply a pragmatic choice of the lesser evil by a vulnerable nation, it was presented as proof of humanitarian motives of British imperialism and of the natural supremacy of the English. Malta, possibly more than any other colony, thus provided the British, including Grand, with an opportunity to represent their imperial expansion in terms of symbiosis mutually beneficial for both parties involved (with the Maltese receiving the needed protection from the British army, and the British using the island as a stronghold for defense in the Mediterranean). Choosing Malta as the colonial location for The Heavenly Twins freed Grand from having to defend the imposition of British colonialism and enabled her to represent the English as a nation whose leadership was recognized and sought after by other peoples.
Popular among the British for its swimming, sailing, and other social occasions, the island was also a perfect choice for a Victorian novelist interested in exploring the role of women in the maintenance of the empire. Since Malta, unlike Joseph Conrad’s Congo, had been domesticated by the British and thus was an appropriate place for British wives, it provided Grand with an opportunity to comment on imperial issues without leaving the safety of the domestic domain. Rather than the eroticized, wild, dark continents, dangerous frontiers, and “savage” natives portrayed in the late nineteenth century by Rider Haggard or Joseph Conrad, what the reader finds in Grand’s contemporary colonial novels and stories are cultivated parks and botanical gardens, luxurious homes, and complacent subalterns. Grand could here easily follow the traditions of domestic fiction and project major political conflicts (including issues concerning the empire) from the public sphere onto the “private” domain of sexual and domestic relations. Like other European wives of colonial officers who wrote narratives set overseas, Grand focused, in her novels and short stories placed in Britain’s colonial possessions (“The Great Typhoon” and “Ah Man”), on descriptions of English wives’ luxurious lifestyles and their supervision of native servants. In her depictions of contacts between the British and the natives (always as mistress–servant relationships), Grand was disseminating and reinforcing the beliefs of her compatriots in their own racial superiority. Britain’s right to rule is never contested in her texts; no dissenting opinions are voiced and no conflicts between the British and the native population are invoked.

Although the choice of more domesticated settings made the representation of colonial experience in Grand’s narratives distinct from the British colonial experience as depicted by Conrad, Haggard, or Kipling, Grand’s texts did share some discursive practices with her male contemporaries. However luxurious, sheltered, and seemingly safe her overseas settings might appear, the appearance of security typically proves deceptive, and Grand’s exotic locations turn out in the end to be perilous for English women. Both “The Great Typhoon” (set in Hong Kong) and “Ah Man” (set in one of Britain’s “treaty ports” in China) focus on natural disasters. Typhoons and earthquakes interrupt the quiet and leisurely life (guaranteed by the principle of extraterritoriality—security of British citizens from Chinese justice) of the characters of colonial wives, reminding them of the dangers lurking underneath the exotic surface. It also seems significant that Evadne’s hysteria in The Heavenly Twins is induced by a promise Evadne made to her husband in Malta and that the beginning of her mental deterioration is marked by Maltese fever, a disease specific to
the island, with which she was infected in this colony. Similarly, it is in Malta where Edith’s engagement to Sir Mosley, which marks the beginning of her tragedy, takes place. Although it is to some extent neutralized and subdued in her writing, Grand’s narratives share the male colonial writers’ practice of depicting Britain’s overseas territories as places dangerous and potentially fatal to the English population.57

IRISH AND THE FETISH OF WHITE SKIN IN THE BETH BOOK

The protagonist of Grand’s The Beth Book (1897) seems to be more comfortable with border crossing than the women characters in The Heavenly Twins. Beth’s financial circumstances are more precarious than the economic situation of Edith, Angelica, or Evadne in Grand’s earlier novel, and this insecurity brings her into a closer contact with lower classes. Also, spending her childhood in Ireland provides Beth with first-hand experience of the Irish people, to some extent problematizing her relationship to English culture. Furthermore, it is implied that Beth herself might be a product of cross-racial breeding. While her mother is a “pure-blooded” English gentlewoman proud of her aristocratic lineage, her father’s origins are somewhat obscure. His promiscuity, heavy drinking, and quick temper are directly linked in the narrative with his mixed pedigree, suggested by his physiognomy, especially skin color. “His features were European,” the narrator describes him, “but his complexion, and his soft glossy black hair, curling close and crisp to the head, betrayed a dark drop in him, probably African. In the West Indies he would certainly have been set down as a quadroon” (4). The reader is assured that there was no record of “negro” blood in the family and no trace of ancestors who would have lived abroad, but this explicit information about Beth’s father’s ancestry seems to be surpassed by the suggested inscription of foreign origins in his physical features.

The author’s decision to present her protagonist as a likely product of cross-racial, or at least cross-cultural, breeding and as (initially) identifying more strongly with her mysterious father than her aristocratic and more mundane English mother seems to imply later relaxation of Grand’s attitude toward the racial and cultural hierarchy prescribed by evolutionary discourse and toward border crossings in general. Indeed, in her enlightening discussion of fin-de-siècle evolutionary psychology and Grand’s critical reevaluation of its misogynist assumptions and implications in The Beth Book, Patricia Murphy calls Beth a “universal symbol of marginality.”58
Still—perhaps to some extent undercutting Murphy’s reading of the novel as implicitly critiquing “the entire spectrum of an evolutionary theory built on the supremacy of the higher-class white male”\(^5^9\)—the representations of the Irish and the poor in the book are most of the time stereotypical (much as was the choice of an Irish background for the “degenerate” Colquhoun in *The Heavenly Twins*), and their presumed cultural inferiority seems to be taken for granted. The narrator, for instance, states approvingly about the young Beth that “although she was so much more with the common people, as she had been taught to call them, than with her own class, she did not adopt their standards, and shrank always with innate refinement from everything gross” (82). The town where Beth’s family lives is divided into Irish and English neighborhoods, and the cabins and people on the Irish side are described as disorderly and sluggish:

Anne came from one of the cabins on the Irish side of the road, where people, pigs, poultry, with an occasional cow, goat, or donkey herded together indiscriminately. The windows were about a foot square, and were not made to open. Sometimes they had glass in them, but were oftener stopped up with rags. Before the doors were heaps of manure and pools of stagnant water. . . . The women hung about the doors all day long, knitting the men’s blue stockings, and did little else apparently. Both men and women were usually in a torpid state, the result, doubtless, of breathing a poisoned atmosphere, and of insufficient food. It took strong stimulants to rouse them: love, hate, jealousy, whisky, battle, murder, and sudden death. Their conversation was gross, and they were very immoral; but it is hardly necessary to say so, for with men, women, children, and animals all crowded together in such surroundings, and the morbid craving for excitement to which people who have no comfort or wholesome interest in life fall a prey, immorality is inevitable. (44–45)

The passage suggested (to the Victorian reader) cultural inferiority of the Irish by depicting them as idle and lethargic, living in a slovenly domestic environment side by side with their livestock.\(^6^0\) The lack of discrimination among men, women, children, and the animals, combined with the lack of domestic order, seems to breed a poisoning atmosphere, which has, it is implied, “regressive” effects on the race. The picture of the Irish homestead, strewn with pools of stagnant water, mud, and manure threatening to invade the domestic space, invokes a primordial scene, discursively sending the Irish inhabitants back to prehistory and constructing them as
subordinate in relation to the cultural norm likely upheld by Grand's English readers. Although Beth's family is impoverished, their middle-class household—furnished with the English mother's genteel furniture and taste—is still a source of the Irish neighbors' admiration, even awe. It clearly represents a norm of domesticity in the narrative and stands contrasted with the unflattering image of the squalor invoked uncritically as representing Irish life.

While the picture is described through the narrator's voice, it appears closely in keeping with the perspective of Beth's mother, Mrs. Caldwell. She herself observes her Irish neighbors as if from a distance: “like a civilized traveler, intelligently studying the customs of a savage people” (8). Placing Beth's mother on the side of the English norm and orientalizing the father, Grand reverses the convention in Victorian fiction of representing exotic “otherness” in the female character and dominant English values in a male.61 This inversion enables her to conflate the maternal line in her narrative with the values privileged in the dominant Victorian discourse of evolution. As one negative consequence, all potential censuring of the racial and cultural inequities inscribed into evolutionary discourse would be now also directed against the mother-figure. For instance, when on one of the few occasions of the narrator's siding with the Irish villagers they are praised for their lack of social prejudices, it seems to require a simultaneous censure of the English Mrs. Caldwell. Irish tolerance is contrasted with Mrs. Caldwell’s condescending attitude toward lower classes—with her “strong class prejudice which makes such stupid snobs of the English” (52). Similarly, the description of Beth's attachment to her colonial nurse, the Irish Roman Catholic Kitty, is accompanied by the narrator's chastisement of Beth's biological mother's lack of care for her daughter. The novel begins with a sympathetic portrayal of Mrs. Caldwell, but the narrator's critical censure of her gradually increases, and Beth's search for an identity that would be independent of the roles prescribed to her as a woman by her mother's culture takes place in the context of her mother's disapproval and of a growing distance between the two women. Similar to the Victorian women discussed by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who found themselves at war with their mothers when searching for identity unfettered by prescribed feminine roles,62 the young Beth, possibly Grand's most uninhibited character, realizes that an emancipation from English gender codes requires of her a painful sacrifice of renouncing her mother for whose recognition she yearns.

Beth's feelings toward her mother remain ambiguous as she continues simultaneously to yearn for and apprehend closeness with her. While she
perhaps cannot command her ambivalent desire for identification with her mother, Beth gains some control over her feelings by manipulating what she inherited from the maternal side of the family—her delicate white complexion. Skin becomes in The Beth Book an overdetermined fetish; it embodies and enables Beth to manipulate symbolically the seemingly irresolvable contradictions in the narrative. Her complexion enables Beth to affirm her relation with her mother, whatever tensions might in fact exist between the two women. Simultaneously, the maintenance of her white skin also helps Beth resolve the social contradiction between her wish to declare visibly her aristocratic social status on the one hand and her actual uncertain financial circumstances on the other. Since, as an economically constrained genteel woman, she cannot rely on clothes to announce her upper-class origin, Beth instead becomes preoccupied with the care for her delicate skin as a presumably more stable mark of her genteel birth. Her ability to manipulate this fetish gives Beth a sense of control over the ambiguities of her social position. Although her dresses are worn-out and ridiculed, her “fine limbs and satin-smooth white skin, so different in color and texture from their own” (271), set Beth off from her lower-class neighbors and bring her the desired admiration and recognition of the “common girls.” In her circumstances, which make border crossing a matter of necessity, Beth holds onto her manners and delicate skin in a true fetishist fashion. The care of her complexion is described as a ritualistic duty demanding much self-control:

> It has been enjoined upon her by her mother in her early childhood as a solemn duty, and had entailed much self-denial in matters of food and drink, quantities being restricted, and certain things prohibited at certain times, while others were forbidden altogether. She had had to exercise patience, also, in the concoction and use of delicately perfumed washes of tonic and emollient properties, home distilled, so as to be perfectly pure; all of which had been strictly practiced by her like sacred rites or superstitious observances upon the exact performance of which good fortune depends. (422)

The care of Beth’s skin and manners is invoked by the narrator to indicate her moral and mental state, with every breach of this ritual being represented as evidence of her moral deterioration. The narrative deployment of Beth’s skin, however, not only reinforces but also subverts Grand’s dedication to biological determinism. The anxieties over Beth’s complexion, which the text betrays, can be interpreted as exposing the
narrator's suspicion that even this marker of social location, which seems to be inscribed and fixed onto the body, is not much more reliable than clothing and that (similar to gender differences) the nature of social and racial distinctions is invented and performed into existence, rather than being inherent.

Investing Beth’s skin with the power to signify her racial and social status enabled Grand to transfer late-nineteenth-century evolutionists’ concerns and goals from the public to the domestic domain. Through the care or alternately the neglect of her white complexion, Beth participates in the maintenance of English racial purity. Her skin becomes the object that connects the racial with the feminine, the public with the domestic, and the evolutionist with the maternal. However, as the above-quoted passage on self-control suggests, Beth’s duty to preserve her upper-class whiteness dictates rituals of restraint that—while rewarding her with pure skin—at the same time also instill in her a proper feminine patience and self-denial, which she initially opposed. Her ritualistic care for her complexion, while enabling Beth to identify with her mother’s privileged racial and social status, enforces on her many “feminine virtues.” Beth’s racial, gender, and class identity thus come into existence in and through relation to each other and are manipulated and conjoined by the instilled aesthetic value of white complexion. Although she in various ways resists the conventional model of feminine behavior, promising to become a model of women’s emancipation from restraining Victorian gender codes, the desire to maintain her upper-class location, which prescribes her acceptance of the ideal of whiteness, also, by extension, dictates to Beth an identification with “proper” femininity.

Similar to The Beth Book, Grand’s short story “The Yellow Leaf” (1894) is preoccupied with the theme of miscegenation and suggests links between the issues of femininity and race. At the center of “The Yellow Leaf” is the story of a cross-cultural marriage between Evangeline, a rather superficial genteel English woman, and her husband, whose non-European ancestry is reflected in his “exquisite Oriental eyes.” The most interesting aspect of the story in the context of this chapter is its narrative use of the female character’s fixation on her appearance, particularly her complexion, to link gender and racial issues. Evangeline’s maternal preference for her fair-skinned daughter and neglect of her son, because “a dark drop that there was in his father’s family had come out in him” (126), is juxtaposed in the narrative with Evangeline’s persistent anxiety about the “state of her femininity,” reflected in her constant obsession with her complexion and appearance and in her paralyzing fear of aging, which domi-
nates her every waking hour and which finally drives her to suicide. The maternal neglect of the dark-skinned boy is censured by Evangeline’s cousin, a “sensible woman” character who seems to be conveying the narrator’s point of view. It is from this woman’s perspective that the reader sees the folly of Evangeline’s preoccupation with the external which leads both to her lack of feelings for her son and eventually to her death. Nevertheless, rather than concerning itself with the heroine’s racial prejudices, the primary criticism is directed to her earlier ignorance on the subject and her ensuing unreadiness for the consequences of her cross-cultural marriage. While the narrator of “The Yellow Leaf” seems to sympathize with the dark-skinned boy, it does not appear to be the narrative’s purpose to challenge the Victorian anti-miscegenation prejudice. Rather, the point here seems to be to censure Evangeline’s refusal to grow from a young woman into a proper mother-figure, and to portray cross-racial breeding as imprudent and as having potentially tragic repercussions.

CONCLUSION

While appreciating Grand’s focus on previously tabooed issues, her interrogation of gender identity, and her (however temporary) disruptions of the traditions of domestic fiction, we should not ignore that Grand’s famous *The Heavenly Twins* inherited the racial bias of the evolutionary discourse and implicitly and explicitly supported British imperialism, connecting thus feminist issues for many of Grand’s contemporaries with racism of the imperialist project. It would be a mistake to try to willfully wish away the ethnocentric aspect of Grand’s work and to excuse her work from post-colonial critique just because she was an early feminist, particularly since Grand’s loyalty to the colonial narrative in the end jeopardized her feminism. Grand created in her most popular novels a feminist discourse obsessed with purity and protection of borders, centered on issues and interests of white English upper-class women, and disavowing the experience of women of other classes and races. Both the careful control of cross-cultural and cross-racial contacts in *The Heavenly Twins* and the preoccupation with the maintenance of whiteness of Beth’s complexion implicate Grand’s texts in the technologies of “biopower.” In Grand’s writing, these technologies of power, while assisting in the cultivation of Britain’s privileged classes, are also directly linked with colonial themes and with the preservation of racial and cultural dominance of the British in the colonies.
The assertion of fixed and inherent identity and of the model of stable and hierarchized social relations is sometimes accompanied in Grand's narrative with a sense of anxiety (betrayed, for instance, in the obsessiveness of Beth's care for her skin or in the strictness of Evadne's adherence to social codes of contact). Such anxiety would suggest a suppressed suspicion, in Grand's writings, of a different archetype of the self (fluid and performative rather than internalized and fixed) and of society (as a place of constant, uncontrolled, cross-cultural exchanges). This alternative model, which could have opened her feminism to an exploration of differences and heterogeneities among women, is, however, shunned in Grand's works as inappropriate and as potentially endangering the health of the English upper classes and the interests of the empire.
George Egerton, c. 1899.