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# **Writing the Victorian Home**

## ***A Nursemaid's Perspective on Maternity and Empire***

One of the most popular figures associated with the British Victorian home over the past two centuries has been the Victorian mother in her role as the “Angel in the House,” presiding over a tranquil family hearth insulated from the chaos of public life by her love of domestic order.<sup>1</sup> Many scholars have noted that such an idyllic separation of public and private spheres simply did not exist in practice; some women were employed outside of their homes and even for those who were not, their activities in the domestic arena were significant to various public matters. To name just a couple of examples, domestic women were important consumers of industrial and imperial goods and were tasked with raising the children who would be the future rulers of the British Empire. In rethinking Victorian literature with such matters in mind, scholars have overlooked one important group of women almost completely: nursemaids. Nursemaids (working-class women who were hired by the middle- and upper-classes to care for their children) played a central role in sustaining the Victorian home and need to be incorporated into our current understandings of Victorian maternity.<sup>2</sup>

The literary text I focus on, *Aunt Janet's Legacy to her Nieces*, is the autobiographical account of Janet Bathgate, a Victorian working-class woman who worked as a nursemaid. Written in a third-person narrative voice rather than the more common first-person autobiographical “I,” the text moves between the categories of non-fictional “fact” and imaginative “fiction,” making it a complex and rich literary source. The mothering that I analyze in this text is done by two nursemaids: the author and an Indian *ayah*.<sup>3</sup> Sustained engagement with Janet Bathgate’s representation of her interactions with the Indian *ayah* reveals the importance of non-biological mother figures in Victorian literature as well as their complex relationships to ideologies of domesticity

and empire. Bathgate's text shows that nursemaids and their charges participated in discourses of empire in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. On one hand, Bathgate's representation of the way her employers (the Pringles) position her in regard to the *ayah* suggests that she is aligned with the racial Other in that they share space as servants who are subservient to a young girl of a higher class. On the other hand, Bathgate distances herself from the *ayah* and positions herself as one who is maintaining a dominant, white, British Empire. This episode demonstrates how central the presence or absence of nursemaids, both British and non-British, were to the maintenance of a "proper" Victorian home.

Janet Bathgate begins to work for the Pringle family because she expects her duties as an under-nurserymaid there to be relatively light, which allows her to recuperate from a long illness. After a few weeks, Bathgate is sent to the main residence of Mrs. Pringle (the grandmother in the family) to meet Mary, Mrs. Pringle's seven-year-old grandchild who is returning from India with an *ayah* to whom she is very attached. Bathgate's first recollection of their appearance emphasizes the physical and racialized differences between the two:

In a few days the little girl from India arrives, accompanied by a black woman servant [the *ayah*]. What a contrast there is between the two! Miss Mary Pringle has very lovely pale blue eyes, and a profusion of flaxen hair flows over her shoulders. She is attired in a green silk pelisse and white frock. Her *ayah* is dressed in a purple skirt and white, loose spencer; she is bare-headed, and her long black hair is plaited, coiled up, and fastened by a silver comb. She wears silver earrings, in the shape of little bells, a string of yellow beads round her neck, and two or three silver rings on her fingers. (1894: 138-9)

Bathgate's description of the white girl and the Indian woman places emphasis on the racial difference of the *ayah*. Mary's "pale" eyes, blond hair and "white frock" highlight her whiteness and her privileged position. The emphasis on hair in this passage and the "contrast" of the *ayah*'s dark hair to Mary's blondness not only represents Mary as superior, but also implies that sexuality is at issue. As Jennifer Brody notes, "Hair has long been considered a signifier of race, class, and gender, as well as a marker of sexuality. In European culture, blond hair in particular came to be associated with forms of idealized femininity [...], purity and power" (87). Mary's "profusion" of hair, symbolizing acceptable femininity and non-threatening sexuality, is permitted to "flow over her shoulders" while the movement of the *ayah*'s dark hair, a marker of threatening and "exotic" sexuality, is restricted by being "plaited, coiled up, and fastened by a silver comb."

However, the *ayah*'s sexuality is not completely controlled in this representation. While her hair is "coiled up," her head remains uncovered, and the implication of the *ayah* being "bare-headed" in public is that her sexual virtue

may be questioned. Nineteenth-century customs of proper dress and head attire dictated that women's heads be covered both inside and outdoors: "Headgear was always worn—caps could be worn indoors; bonnets invariably when outside" (Pool, 1993: 214). The *ayah* enters the house having an exposed head (and hair), indicating that she has violated these rules of decorum both publicly and in the domestic scene. Furthermore, the *ayah*'s "spencer"—generally a short, close-fitting jacket—is "loose," leaving her breasts unbound. This possible implication of sexual laxity makes the *ayah*'s position as a maternal woman in a "proper" British home threatening.

That Bathgate is drawn to note markers of difference at points where sexuality is displayed or controlled is one way that her participation in Orientalist discourses is apparent.<sup>4</sup> Bathgate's emphasis on the physical appearance of the *ayah* and the absence of the *ayah*'s voice in the text also position Bathgate as a representative of empire, the one who is allowed to look and report. Bathgate's description of the "exotic" trinkets that adorn the *ayah*'s body—a "silver comb," "silver earrings" shaped like bells, "yellow beads" and "two or three silver rings"—places the *ayah* squarely in another, very different, culture. Edward Said notes that this type of emphasis on "exteriority" when representing racial Others is common in Orientalizing and imperialist discourses (1979: 21). Part of the reason "exteriority" and physical markers are focused on is because the tendency in Orientalist writing is always to represent the Orient, or objectify it, rather than to let the Orient speak for itself (Said, 1979: 21). Bathgate further participates in these discourses by never referring to the "black" *ayah* by name.

While Bathgate emphasizes the racial difference of the *ayah* as a "black" Indian woman, she also stresses the maternal status of, and the child's intimate relationship to, the *ayah*. Bathgate's complex description of the family's interactions after Mary's arrival with her *ayah* merits quoting at length:<sup>5</sup>

Everything was done that could be thought of to make Miss Mary's arrival a happy one, but she rejects all caresses, and clings to her black maid, like a loving child to a tender mother. She can speak English, and Hindustani as well. In this language she converses with her ayah, and sometimes weeps bitterly, but not a word of English will she speak to any of her friends. The couple are shown into the bow room next to Janet's, in order to familiarise them in time with each other, but Mary repels all her approaches to kindness. The Indian woman and Janet, however, very soon get warm friends. The former can speak English well, and she tells Janet that Mary is one of the most loving and loveable of children, but she knows that she (her attendant) is to return to India in a few days, and she wishes to go back with her to her own happy home. (1894: 139)

The *ayah*'s status as a maternal figure is clear in this passage as Mary "clings to her black maid, like a loving child to a tender mother." The implied equation of "black maid" and "tender mother" suggests that racial and class borders have

broken down within this home. I have already shown that Bathgate emphasizes the “contrast” between Mary as a “pure” white British girl and the *ayah* as a “loose,” “black” Indian woman. Having emphasized that contrast, the physical and emotional closeness between the two here can be viewed as a threat of miscegenation, if not at a reproductive level as when a man and woman conceive a child then at a discursive level. Brody points out that “if the proper family is the building block of a strong nation, then incest, miscegenation, and hybridity threaten the family (of man) and, by extension, the nation (of proper gentleman)” (1998: 55). The *ayah* threatens a discursive miscegenation as a “black” mother figure for a white girl in Britain. If Mary has a “black” mother figure and will only communicate in the language of that “black” mother, then she has severed the connections with her biological family that would ensure the dominance of the white empire and nation.

Mary’s “pure” Britishness is threatened as long as she clings to this “black” figure even more so because Mary refuses to speak English—perhaps the most forceful way to protest because language is a strong marker of ethnicity and cultural cohesion. By speaking only “Hindustani,” Mary marks the *ayah* as the only adult figure she endows with authority and respect. That both Mary and the *ayah* are able to speak English but do not use that language with one another constitutes active resistance to the authority of the British matriarch, Mrs. Pringle, who expects to be able to monitor all interactions within the household. It is unclear who initiates this form of resistance, but the text seems to lean toward Mary as the instigator. The *ayah* speaks to Bathgate in English, and speaks it “well;” it is Mary who will not speak “a word of English.” Mary rejects her appropriate “native” or “mother tongue,” again aligning herself with the racial Other by communicating in the Othered language of “Hindustani.” This mixing of ethnic markers—Mary as physically “white” yet speaking like and clinging to a dark racial Other—contributes to Mary’s status as a “great mystery” to her cousins and, arguably, to Bathgate’s readers (1894: 139).

Mary’s actions are also threatening to nineteenth-century British ideals of “home” because she does not conflate her comfortable domestic home in India with her official home country of Britain. In fact, she prefers her home in India. The *ayah* says that, rather than parting, Mary would prefer to return with her to “her own happy home.” In this context, the referent of “her” is unclear; the home could be Mary’s or the *ayah*’s. It could refer to the *ayah*’s own home in India, in which case the domestic space of the racial Other has become more comfortable for the child than what is supposed to be her “natural” home in Yair. Or the home could refer to the colonial home in which the *ayah* worked, making a colonized and controlled India the child’s home. What is clear is that the girl wants to be in India with the *ayah*, to “return with her,” and she does not value her British surroundings as ones that will result in happiness. Rosemary Marangoly George argues in *The Politics of Home* that “the basic organizing principle around which the notion of the ‘home’ is built is a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference.

Homes and home-countries are exclusive" (1996: 2). Mary complicates this process of inclusion and exclusion because she does not want to be included where imperial discourses say she should. She does not want to be included in the home that is deemed appropriate for her as an upper-class white girl in Britain. And she does not want to be excluded from the "foreign" home of the racial Other in India. The difference that discourses of home try to establish does not remain clear-cut if Mary insists that her "true" home is in (or simply is) India. Furthermore, Mary threatens the exclusivity of the home in the "home country" by insisting that the *ayah*, as a racial Other, be allowed into it. Thus, Mary is redefining "home" by making its fundamental feature the presence of the *ayah* rather than its location in Britain.

Mary's persistence causes her grandmother to exert domestic and imperial authority by insisting that the *ayah* return to India without Mary. Indeed, she must exercise this authority in order to maintain the home as a site where difference is established:

The day appointed for the ayah's return to India has arrived.... The parting is heartrending. Janet had thought that the children of the rich had no trials, but she sees differently now. Grandmamma locks the room door, takes her seat by the window, and commences her knitting; and Mary, in the anguish of her soul, throws herself upon the floor, crying, "Oh papa, mamma, oh ayah, dear ayah, come back and take me to my happy home—cruel grandmamma! I will die; yes, I will die." (1894: 139-40)

The previously unclear referent of "her own happy home" is now clear as Mary identifies the "home" in India as "my happy home." The *ayah*'s and Mary's "happy home" are one as Mary insists that she will "die" if she is forced to remain away from it. The girl has tied her identity and survival to India, the colony, and her existence is dependent not only upon the colony but also upon the labor of its people. Mary decreases the difference between her *ayah* and her parents by listing them together in her plea, "Oh papa, mamma, oh ayah, dear ayah," and even elevates the *ayah* above her parents by repeating only her name with the endearing "dear." Bathgate's description of the "cruel" grandmother portrays her as the icy, detached ruler of the home, indicated by her possession of the all-important household keys. As the maternal guardian of the home that is the foundation for the British Empire, she "commences her knitting" without paying attention to Mary's pain. The grandmother functions here as the domestic authority figure whose action of locking the door signifies her patrolling of the boundary of the British home in two ways. She is locking Mary in, to keep her in her "homeland" and away from her *ayah*. And she is locking the *ayah* out of the colonizer's home space and out of contact with the child, pushing her back to India.

Again, conceiving of the "home" as a set of decisions about who and what

to include is helpful in understanding the actions that take place in the Pringle family: "The inclusions are grounded in a learned (or taught) sense of a kinship that is extended to those who are perceived as sharing the same blood, race, class, gender, or religion" (George, 1996: 9). In this case, the grandmother is in control of the inclusions, and the *ayah* cannot maintain her membership in the home because all of these factors (blood, race, class, gender and religion) establish her as an Other who belongs in the colonies, abroad. Even as a servant, the *ayah* is no longer an appropriate member of the family once she is in Britain. Bathgate, on the other hand, may become a member of this home because her class difference is not as threatening as the *ayah*'s racial difference. Thus, the select inclusions of the home do not completely exclude all Others, but rather those inclusions are negotiated to admit the least threatening Others as determined by a combination of factors. Although nursemaids functioned as "boundary markers and mediators" who were "ambiguously placed on the imperial divide" (McClintock, 1995: 48), it is important to complicate that notion by noting that all nursemaids were not represented as policing or threatening those boundaries of home and empire in the same way. While members of the working classes and domestic servants, especially those from Ireland, were often racialized in Britain, when represented in contrast to racial Others from abroad these British servants appear to be more "white."

Although Bathgate clearly emphasizes the racial difference of the *ayah*, their relationship becomes more complex when Bathgate validates the *ayah*'s position in a maternal role. Comparing the *ayah* to her own mother, Bathgate initiates a series of complex crisscrossings between class and race. Mary's separation from the *ayah* makes Bathgate recall being separated from her own mother when she entered domestic service at the age of seven: she "herself weeps, for her early experience enables her to understand Mary's bitter sorrow" (1894: 139). Identifying with Mary in this situation, Bathgate places the *ayah* in a maternal position, visualizing the racial Other as her *own* mother. In a sense, then, by envisioning the *ayah* in the position of her mother, Bathgate lessens her focus on the *ayah*'s racial "difference." At the same time, this identification with the *ayah* as a maternal figure also verges on the threat of miscegenation referred to earlier. If Bathgate sees the *ayah* as her own maternal figure, she, as well as Mary, crosses racial boundaries. However, Bathgate's insistence upon identifying with Mary as opposed to the *ayah* in this episode reveals how deeply she is invested in maintaining a white British identity. Bathgate focuses so much on Mary's pain as a mirror of her own at age seven that she does not comment on or allude to the fact that, as a nursemaid who has left several posts, she has most likely been in the *ayah*'s position more often than Mary's. Like the *ayah*, Bathgate has worked as a servant far away from her original home in places that seem foreign and filled with people practicing different religions and cultural traditions.<sup>6</sup> Instead of noting these parallels (or perhaps sharing some insight into what the *ayah* may be feeling), Bathgate stresses her bond to the upper-class white girl.

Some similarities between Bathgate and the *ayah* become even more pronounced after the *ayah* leaves and Mary decides to accept Bathgate, who she calls “Jessie.” Bathgate stays with Mary as she continuously cries following the *ayah*’s departure, remaining awake all night, tending to Mary’s fever, and listening for renewed cries as the girl sleeps. This devotion endears Bathgate to Mary to such an extent that Mary begins to return the friendly feelings that Bathgate has shown her. The next morning, Mary asks Bathgate if she got any sleep of her own. As soon as Bathgate says, “No, darling, you were ill, and I could not leave you,” Mary responds by declaring: “Kind, loving Jessie, you will be my ayah now” (1894: 140). The child now uses the term “*ayah*” to refer to her British nursemaid, and it is Bathgate’s self-sacrifice that completes Mary’s ability to view her in this way. Mary appears to align Bathgate with the *ayah* because both women are in subservient roles to her; once Bathgate privileges Mary’s needs over her own, the girl can see her as having the status of a new *ayah*.<sup>7</sup>

In moving into the *ayah*’s role, Bathgate carefully shifts her representation of difference from one that emphasizes race to one that focuses on class. Immediately following Mary’s declaration, Bathgate appears to accept her role as Mary’s new *ayah*, stating: “So the two hearts were then united till death break the bond. True friendship halves sorrows and shares joys, whether they come to rich or to poor” (1894: 140). The first part of her statement emphasizes that a strong bond, like that between a mother and her child, exists between a nurse and her charge “till death.” The second part implies that any tension between “rich” and “poor” disappears between the nurse and her charge. But in the very intimacy that is constructed in this episode, it is clear that differences in class status are necessary to create the bond because the nurse must occupy a self-sacrificing position. While Bathgate implies that class lines are at least blurred in these maternal bonds, it is clear that lines demarcating race and ethnicity are not. The *ayah* must be sent back to India to prevent her from corrupting the “proper British home” by continuing to act as a mother to the girl while Bathgate is permitted to fill the maternal void.

We do not know why the *ayah* must return to India, only that Mrs. Pringle has insisted upon it and that Mary opposes such a move. The *ayah* may desire to remain with her charge or she may just as well want to leave Britain to return to India, and possibly to a family of her own. This ambiguity surrounding the figure of the *ayah* reminds us of how much information about her Bathgate does not provide. There is a long history to the presence of Indian servants and *ayahs* in Britain. Rozina Visram dates the process of bringing servants to Britain from soon to be colonial territories to at least the beginning of the eighteenth century (11). Although *ayahs* were often brought to Britain in the nineteenth century, they were just as frequently dismissed as soon as the family reached British shores. *Ayahs* were considered to be extremely good nurses at sea, but there was no contract guaranteeing their continued employment when they arrived in Britain: “Once in England, their services were over and they were discharged

to await a return engagement" (Visram, 1986: 29). In Bathgate's text, there appears to be some arrangement for the *ayah's* return passage—"the day appointed for the *ayah's* return to India has arrived"—although this is only an implication (1894: 139). Whether or not the *ayah* in Bathgate's text does safely return to India, it is clear that the presence of an *ayah* who accompanied a child back to Britain from India would not have been an irregularity.

Given that this situation would not have been unusual, and that some *ayahs* did stay in Britain, the question arises: why does Bathgate portray the *ayah* as being so out of place and threatening in the British home? I propose that the episode with the *ayah*, rather than functioning as a commentary on the actual state of "foreign" servants being transported to the British Isles, serves as a method to bolster Bathgate's own image. The entrance and dramatic exit of the *ayah* establish Bathgate as Mary Pringle's savior; she becomes the "new and improved," white and British, *ayah*.

While it is important to pay attention to Bathgate's use of the *ayah* to represent herself in a more positive light, I think it would be wrong to then assume that the *ayah* is a figure completely denied agency. Despite Bathgate's intention, it is possible to read the *ayah* in this representation as retaining some forms of agency. In many ways, Bathgate certainly denies the *ayah* subjectivity by limiting her voice as well as keeping her nameless. The *ayah* has no direct voice in the text; it is always mediated by Bathgate's description and she is never quoted directly. Bathgate says that the *ayah* speaks English well, but we never hear it. And the topics of conversation Bathgate describes all amount to the *ayah* being a transmitter of information that will benefit Bathgate or her "masters" as they try to gain control over Mary Pringle. The *ayah* tells Bathgate why Mary is upset and explains to Mary that Bathgate "loves her" (1894: 139). Bathgate never refers to conversations in which the *ayah* discusses anything about herself or India, nor does she include examples of the conversations her and the *ayah* might have engaged in as "warm friends;" she only includes Mary's utterances (139). Bathgate, then, denies the *ayah* subjectivity because she does not represent the *ayah* as having her own perspective, and she does not acknowledge the *ayah's* own personal feelings or thoughts. After witnessing the separation of Mary and the *ayah*, Bathgate reevaluates her previous opinions about rich children's experiences, but not about Indian domestic workers. Recall that "Janet had thought that the children of the rich had no trials, but she sees differently now" (139). Bathgate's new perspective does not appear to deal with the "trials" of the *ayahs* who cared for the rich children.

However, Bathgate's description leaves open the possibility that the *ayah* possesses a certain amount of agency.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that the *ayah* impacts the Pringle home and the lives of her "masters" tremendously. While the *ayah* is not quoted directly, which contributes to a denial of subjectivity, she is also not silenced completely. Bathgate does make it clear that the *ayah* engages her in conversation, and while the import of those conversations to Bathgate may only have to do with her ability to gather information about and endear herself to



Mary Pringle, the *ayah* is the one controlling the flow of information. Bathgate may use the *ayah* as a sort of translator or transmitter, but nonetheless the *ayah* remains in control of what she translates and how she transmits it. The *ayah*, then, determines what information Bathgate and Mary receive about one another, as well as what information they are kept ignorant of. Also, while it is unclear if the *ayah* or Mary is responsible for deciding to speak only Hindustani in their conversations, it is clear that the *ayah* participates in this behavior that excludes her English speaking “masters.” As the adult who is responding to Mary’s insistence on speaking Hindustani, the *ayah* does not urge Mary to speak English by refusing to answer her in Hindustani, for example.

As discussed above, the *ayah* constitutes a forceful threat to the “British home,” introducing into it not only the presence of a racial Other but also images of miscegenation. By complicating definitions and categories of “race” and “home,” the *ayah* becomes a disruptive figure, and this disruption is a kind of agency. Perhaps the most threatening aspect of this agency is the fact that the *ayah* is the only adult whose authority Mary respects when she arrives from India. The happiness and behavior of the white child at the center of the household’s concerns is determined by a “black” Indian servant, which threatens the grandmother’s domestic authority. It is the *ayah*’s prominence that makes the grandmother have to *use* her key to lock the door of the sitting room when the *ayah* leaves. Rather than being able to rely on her keys as a symbol of authority that will maintain domestic order, Mrs. Pringle is forced to take action in order to maintain both domestic and imperial borders. Continuing with this line of analysis, we can also read the markers of the *ayah*’s racial “difference,” such as the beads and dress that she wears, as an insistence on retaining her own traditions and culture while in Britain. The *ayah* may not benefit materially from these actions, but nevertheless it is important to pay attention to this type of agency because it clearly affects the functioning and maintenance of discourses of domesticity and empire. The *ayah* produces a tremendous effect on the British “home,” participating in the discourses surrounding it rather than only being affected by them.

While Bathgate laments Mary’s loss, she never indicates that Mrs. Pringle makes a mistake by separating Mary from her *ayah*. In fact, Bathgate does not hesitate to replace the *ayah* immediately following her departure. Bathgate’s failure to mention the *ayah* again suggests that she may indirectly support the grandmother’s decision. We can read this silence as implying that because Mary ends up happy with Bathgate, a “proper” British nursemaid, readers need not be concerned with the fate of the *ayah*. Bathgate and Mary Pringle become so close that after only six months, when Bathgate leaves Mary to return to the main family residence, Mary is as distraught at the prospect of losing Bathgate as she was at losing her *ayah*. Bathgate has completely replaced the *ayah*, but in this case, Mary’s protests at being separated from her maternal figure are successful and she is reunited with Bathgate. Mary is permitted to maintain a close bond with her British (“white”) nursemaid, a bond she was prevented from

maintaining with her Indian (“black”) *ayah*. Bathgate has reconstructed this episode in a manner that portrays Mary’s relationship with the *ayah* as threatening in a way that her relationship with Bathgate is not.<sup>9</sup>

To understand these complex dynamics surrounding maternity in the Victorian period, we must understand the presence and function of nursemaids as related not only in traditional literature penned by the parents who hired nursemaids, but also from the perspective of nursemaids themselves. The voices of nursemaids clearly allow us to see some of the ways that motherhood is constructed from a unique perspective. Janet Bathgate’s description of her experiences shows that nursemaids were important mother figures. The relationships between Mary Pringle and both of her nursemaids show that children became at least as attached to nursemaids as they did to their biological mothers. Furthermore, Bathgate’s description of her encounter with an *ayah* begins to reveal which maternal relationships were viewed as threatening and which were more permissible. It then becomes clear that British nursemaids did not occupy only passive roles in dominant discourses (of maternity, domesticity, and empire), but rather actively reinforced them by engaging in actions such as excluding racial Others from the “proper British home.” Nevertheless, while Bathgate clearly denies subjectivity to the *ayah*, her representation also (seemingly inadvertently) demonstrates that there was room for racial Others to exercise a significant amount of agency and disrupt the very homes from which they were assumedly excluded. The figure of the *ayah* brings race to the forefront of Bathgate’s text, showing how central the concept was in determining who was allowed to become a “good mother” in this period, even in the “substitute” role or capacity of a nursemaid.

<sup>1</sup>I borrow this now familiar phrase, “Angel in the House,” from the title of Coventry Patmore’s 1854 poem.

<sup>2</sup>It is difficult to determine exactly how many women were employed as nursemaids in the nineteenth century and how many households employed them. Nursemaids were counted in national census figures, but it is unclear how reliable these figures are. In regard to domestic servants, J. A. Banks notes that the census “seems to have been at its most confused and unreliable in handling this category” (1954: 102). Nevertheless, these figures do suggest that nursemaids increased in number throughout the century; in England and Wales, Banks notes a 110.1 percent increase in the number of people identified as nursemaids between 1851–1871 while the general population grew only 26.7 percent over the same twenty year period (83). Banks lists 35,937 nursemaids in the 1851 census, 67,785 in 1861, and 75,491 in 1871 (83). These appear to be conservative estimates, given that the number of nursemaids listed in other summaries of the census tend to be substantially higher.

<sup>3</sup>As I discuss below, Bathgate never names the *ayah* in her text.

<sup>4</sup>See Edward Said’s *Orientalism* for a fuller discussion of the various and

overlapping definitions of this term. In short, I use “Orientalism” to characterize the western tendency to define Eastern cultures as “exotic” or different; I follow Said in understanding “Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (1979: 3).

<sup>5</sup>Recall that Janet Bathgate writes this autobiography in the third person. Thus, in the quotations I excerpt from the text, Bathgate is referring to herself as “Janet.”

<sup>6</sup>Especially as a young girl in domestic service, Bathgate struggles to remain true to her Nonconformist faith. In Anglican homes, and even in some Nonconformist homes, it is difficult for her to continue praying and observing the Sabbath according to the strict customs her parents followed.

<sup>7</sup>Although Mary begins to refer to Janet Bathgate as her new *ayah*, to maintain clarity all future references to “the *ayah*” in my text refer to the *ayah* from India.

<sup>8</sup>For the purposes of this argument, I include the following traits in my definition of a person with agency: “one who (or that which) exerts power; who produces an effect” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

<sup>9</sup>When Bathgate must care for another upper-class child, she and Mary do part ways. By that time, Bathgate has prepared Mary to attend a boarding school so that Bathgate may tend to a sickly newborn infant in the family.

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