GEORGIANA MOLLOY, JANE PORTER AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EXPLORATION NARRATIVES FOR NEW BEGINNINGS IN A STRANGE LAND

Peta Beasley
(University of Western Australia)

Abstract

Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative, first published in 1831, was an instant success: the *London Quarterly Review* acknowledged that it had gone into its second edition within twelve months. Edited by Jane Porter, *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative* follows the model of other exploration narratives, but diverges from the formulae in its focus on 'homespun achievements' and 'conjugal bliss and domestic contentment' rather than mutiny and massacre.[1]

Georgiana Molloy arrived in the Swan River colony in 1830, settling in the remote south-west of Western Australia. With no home comforts Georgiana had to adapt to the many hardships of colonial life in this unfamiliar land. Despite her time being mostly absorbed in the daily grind, she was determined to find time to read.

In 1834 Georgiana wrote in a letter to her best friend in England that she was reading *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative*. This was the first work of fiction that Georgiana had read since arriving in the colony, and yet this novel, I propose, was the motivation for her finding purpose and passion in her harsh surroundings. This paper will explore how *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative,* with its focus on 'homespun achievements', mutual support, companionship and adherence to the Sabbath, became for Georgiana the foundation of beginnings in the challenging and harsh environment in which she found herself. [2]

In August 1829, the young Georgiana Kennedy married Captain John Molloy, twenty-four years her senior. Within a few months Captain Molloy and his wife packed up all their belongings and sailed from Portsmouth, on board the *Warrior*, arriving almost six months later in the newly established Swan River Colony in Western Australia. Georgiana was heavily pregnant with her first child. However, the conditions in the colony were so severe, and Georgiana so malnourished from the long journey, that the baby died within a few days of its birth. This was to be the first of nine pregnancies in twelve years for Georgiana. Only five resulted in children who lived beyond infancy. The Swan River Colony did not prove to be the viable land promised by the Governor, Captain Stirling, so Captain Molloy and Georgiana, along with two other families and a few servants, moved some three hundred kilometres south to the area now known as Augusta. With only a tent for shelter, a few household utensils and very little in the way of provisions, life for Georgiana in Augusta was a far cry from the life she knew back in England.

In a letter to her friend Helen Storey, Georgiana wrote of how she was 'overwhelmed with too much labour', physically suffering to the point where she exclaimed how everyday she expected 'to see some bone poking through its

[1]William Lines, *An All Consuming Passion* (New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p. 189.
[2] Ibid.

epidermis'.[3] However, along with these descriptions of suffering there was a glimmer of hope. Georgiana explained to Helen that she has just finished reading the remarkable story of a shipwrecked couple, Edward and Eliza Seaward. Georgiana described the story of the achievements of this couple as an inspiration, writing that it was 'a delightful book and one much suited to this strange life'.[4] The book Georgiana read is the exploration narrative, *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative of His Shipwreck, and Consequent Discovery of Certain Islands in the Caribbean Sea: With a Detail of Many Extraordinary and Highly Interesting Events in His Life from the Year 1733 to 1749, as Written in His Own Diary,* edited by Jane Porter, author of the popular novels *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803) and *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810). While future letters reveal that the hardships did continue, inspired by the Seawards' story Georgiana gradually created a home. In time she recognised that this small colony of Augusta, in the remote south-west of Western Australia, was a place that promises hope and a future. Despite dying at the very young age of thirty-eight, Georgiana is remembered as one of the founding pioneers of the Augusta region, and more significantly as a noted botanist. Her collection and identification of Western Australia's native flora was reported in George Bentham's *Flora Australiensis*, published between 1863 and 1878, and in Briteen and Boulger's *A Biographical Index of Deceased British and Irish Botanists*, featured in the *Journal of Botany* between 1888 and 1891.[5]

Although *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative* is a work of fiction and the life of Georgiana Molloy a historical reality, both stories poignantly capture the feelings and tremendous hardships that new settlers had to endure. Both stories also inherently reflect the struggle to create that 'circle of domestic happiness', which according to John Kemble was so important during the nineteenth-century for Britain's fostering of Empire and colonial expansion.[6] The concept of 'home', and particularly the 'domestic', was fundamental to the nineteenth century British concept of Empire. In both *Seaward's Narrative* and the story of Georgiana Molloy, 'home' is envisaged as an expanded domestic space. Susan Strehle, in *Transnational Women's Fiction: Unsettling Home and Homeland* (2008), describes 'home' as 'central and centering' to the nation.[7]

Rosemary Marangoly George, in *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (1999), asserts that novels in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century were seen as having a mainly female

[3] 'The Letters of Georgiana Molloy', *The Western Australian Historical Society,* ed. by W.G Pickering, Part IV, 1929, p. 48 (December 8, 1834).
[4] Lines, p.189.
[5] Alexandra Hasluck, *Georgiana Molloy: Portrait with Background* (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2002), p. 305.
[6] John Kemble, *The Saxons in England* (1848), quoted in Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 87.
[7] Susan Strehle, *Transnational Women's Fiction: Unsettling Home and Homeland* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), p.1.

readership and were therefore 'irrelevant to the workings of the national destiny'.[8] However, she states that with the 'advent of colonial fiction', the novel, with its focus on 'love, courtship […] the home and domesticity […] can be read as the imagining of one's (domestic) ideology in an expanded space' and therefore its 'implications in events of nation and empire can no longer be ignored'.[9] The domestic space in these novels is expanded into a metaphor for the national. Although George's study focuses on colonial literature, and the effects of colonialism in the twentieth century, her insights and her argument help to illuminate the plight of Georgiana and her response both to her situation and to her reading of *Seaward's Narrative.* The 'home' created by Edward and Eliza Seaward on their island can be defined as 'an empire in miniature'.[10] It becomes a representation of England, complete with all the trappings of the domestic, defined by George as embodying 'shelter, comfort, nurture and protection'.[11] Although it is a work of fiction, I would argue that *Seaward's Narrative* was instrumental in empowering Georgiana, giving her a blueprint for effecting positive change. Importantly, common to both stories is the agency of women. Through the fictional Eliza Seaward, Georgiana found a frame of reference to overcome the challenging environment and establish a 'home'. I would argue too that Eliza Seaward and Georgiana Molloy both become, in Strehle's words, 'active agents of empire'.[12]

The editor of *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative*, Jane Porter, was born in Durham on 3 December 1775.[13] One of five children, she was the eldest daughter of William Porter (1735-1779) and Jane Blenkinsop Porter (1745-1831). The eldest, John (1772-1810) rose to the rank of Colonel; William Ogilvie (1774-1850) was an eminent medical doctor in the Royal Navy; Robert Ker (1777-1842) a historical artist and attaché to the Russian czar; and the youngest, Anna Maria (1780-1832), was also a novelist. Porter was the author of four novels, *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803), *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810), *The Pastor's Fire-side* (1817) and *Duke Christian of Luneburg* (1824) plus various collaborative works and other minor texts published in

[8] Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 4. The subject of women's post-colonial fiction is huge and one that I will not fully develop or argue in this paper, as my concentration is on exploration narratives and also the agency of the female protagonist. Although I refer to the works of George and Strehle, it is their definition of 'home' and the 'domestic' which is most pertinent to this paper.

[9] George, p. 4.

[10] Ibid., p. 6.

[11] Ibid., p. 1.

[12] Strehle, p. 24.

[13] There is speculation regarding the actual year Porter was born. Until the most recent DNB entry (2004) Porter's birth date has been recorded as 3 December 1776, which is somewhat problematic given that her brother Robert was born in the early part of 1777 and was baptised on 10 July 1777. However, Dorothy McMillan in her 2004 entry records Porter's baptism year as being 1776. I have investigated this as far as possible and can confirm that Porter's date of birth is in fact the 3 December as in a diary entry of 3 December 1831 she writes "My Birth-Day!" On checking the baptism entries of the St Mary le Bow Church in Durham, where the Porter children were baptised, it is recorded that Jane was baptised on 17 January 1776. It is known that she died on the 24th May 1850 at the age of 74 and so I can only conclude that she was in fact born on 3 December 1775.

periodicals and compilations. She continued writing until her death at the age of seventy-five in 1850. Although not as immediately popular as *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, *The Scottish Chiefs* went on to become one of the most widely read novels of the nineteenth century, publication records show that it was still being re-published as late as 1922, and as recently as a 2007 Broadview edition. Porter gained much notoriety with the popularity of her novels and critics' reviews were lavish in their praise. Both *Thaddeus of Warsaw* and *The Scottish Chiefs* were translated into many languages and distributed across many continents, the *Literary Biography* reports that it 'went through six nineteenth century editions and printings'.[14]

The *London Quarterly Review* (1832) wrote that it 'must possess some kind of merit to have carried it to a second edition within twelvemonth'.[15] The *Review* described the novel as 'interesting and amusing' and praised its style and language as being 'perfectly natural, and […] extremely affecting'.[16] Also in 1832 the *Athenaeum* published a poem by writer Geraldine Jewsbury, praising the adventures of the 'noble minded husband and wife […] their mode of living […] their plans, difficulties and complete success'.[17] The poem begins with an address to the reader suggesting:

> Whether the 'Narrative' be truth touched by fancy, or fancy working on truth, the result is equally captivating; and whether they belong to tale or history, the characters of Sir Edward Seaward and his lady equally excite interest and challenge admiration.[18]

In creating his fictional character Arthur Gordon Pym, Edgar Allan Poe also drew inspiration from *Seaward's Narrative*. Randel Helms, in his essay 'Another Source for Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym', writes that Poe's fictional hero Pym and the title *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) 'came directly from [Poe's] memory of Jane Porter's work'.[19] Helm argues that Poe was reading *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative* (1831) at the time he began writing *Pym* and this is evident when comparing the opening chapters of Poe's novel and the account of the Seawards' shipwreck. Helm writes:

> Poe must have been reading *Seaward* at the time he was working on those chapters of *Pym* that recount his hero's being trapped in the hold of the *Granpus* [the ship] and his subsequent drifting on the mastless hulk,

[14] Michael Adams, 'Jane Porter', in *British Romantic Novelists, 1789-1832, Dictionary of Literary Biography* Series 159, ed. by K. Bradford (Mudge, Detroit, Gale Research Inc., 1992), p. 269.
[15] Anonymous, 'Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative of his Shipwreck, and Consequence Discovery of Certain Islands in the Caribbean Sea: With a Detail of Many Extraordinary and Highly Interesting Events of His Life From the Year 1733 to 1749, ed. by Miss Jane Porter', Art VIII. *London Quarterly Review*, (1832), p. 480.
[16] Anonymous, *London Quarterly Review*, p. 480.
[17] Mrs Fletcher, 'Lines Written after Reading Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative', *Athenæum* (1 December, 1832), p. 777.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Randel Helms, 'Another Source for Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym', *American Literature*, Vol. 41/4 (Jan 1970), p. 573.

> for it is these early episodes that most clearly have their inspiration in Jane Porter's work.[20]

As well as providing inspiration, the novel also generated much speculation as to whether it was a work of fact or fiction. The *London Quarterly Review* wrote how:

> [N]ine-tenths of those who had perused the book, and among others a great many naval officers, (a naval man, we suspect, has been concerned in the manufacture,) believed it to be a true and genuine story.[21]

After a lengthy dissection of 'some of the principal transactions recorded in this extraordinary Narrative', the author of the review concludes that 'it is neither more nor less than pure, unmingled fiction from first to last'.[22]

There was also much speculation about its actual authorship. Although Jane Porter is clearly named as editor on the title page, many believed this was merely a ploy to conceal her authorship, or to give the text greater authority by claiming that it was a true account by Sir Edward Seaward.[23] Porter refuted claims that she was the author, writing in the 'Preface' that she merely 'undertook the task of being its editor'.[24] Fiona Price in *Notes and Queries* (2002) proposes that *Seaward's Narrative* was written by Porter's older brother, William Ogilvie Porter. Price bases her conclusion on a series of letters to and from Porter and her brother William just prior to the novel's publication. The letters reveal that William was responsible for initially penning *Seaward's Narrative*. However, Price concedes that there was a very complex process of collaboration between the siblings throughout. William's letter to Porter of March 1831 clearly shows that she used her literary skills to significantly refine and edit the manuscript, as William acknowledged his sister's invaluable help in producing the novel's final draft:

> I am well pleased […] that you are reading the [manuscript] over again, and I both hope and believe you will find it much improved in many respects – In some of your corrections […] you will recognise much of

[20] Ibid.
[21] Anonymous, *London Quarterly Review*, p. 501.
[22] Anonymous, *London Quarterly Review*, p. 506.
[23] See, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature,* ed. By James Kennedy, W.A. Smith and A.F. Johnson, Vol 5 (1929), p. 274; Michael Adams, 'Jane Porter', *Dictionary of Literary Biography: British Romantic Novelists, 1798-1832,* Vol. 116 (1992); 'Jane Porter 1776-1850', *The New Cambridge Bibliography 1800-1900,* ed by George Watson, Vol 3 (1969), p. 758. Joanne Shattock in *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature,* Vol 4 (1999), lists the narrative as 'Of doubtful attribution' (p. 987).
[24] *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative of his Shipwreck, and Consequent Discovery of Certain Islands in the Caribbean Sea: With a Detail of Many Extraordinary and Highly Interesting Events in his Life from the Year 1733 to 1749, as Written in his own Diary,* ed. by Jane Porter (London, Longman, Rees, Orme et al, 1831), p. viii. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

your own, and always as an improvement.[25]

More recently, in the 2004 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Dorothy McMillan also claims that William was responsible for the writing of novel, using the argument that William drew on his naval experiences in the creation of the manuscript. McMillan, in fact, inadvertently praises the success of *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative* by stating that Porter's denial of authorship is a great loss to the Porter canon, because in the wake of her other successes, it would have shown to the literary world her versatility as a writer.[26] I would argue that the most significant contribution by Porter to the novel is the creation of the fictional heroine, Eliza Seaward. Porter's previous heroines, Mary Beaufort (*Thaddeus of Warsaw*), Marion Wallace and Helen Mar (*The Scottish Chiefs*), Marcella Santa Cruz (*The Pastor's Fire-side*) and the Princess Elizabeth (*Duke Christian*) are strong intelligent women who stand their ground steadfastly and are always prepared to fight for what is right. Through her heroines Porter articulated her belief that women are capable of action and rational thought. Mary, Marion and Helen, in particular, demonstrate the pivotal role women play in the maintenance of domestic order, especially during periods of revolution and national unrest. Like all Porter's heroines, Eliza Seaward is compassionate, virtuous; and most importantly, a strong companion to, and equal helpmate of, her husband. Eliza Seaward is another clear example of how Porter also uses her heroines to effect moral improvement. It is the characterisation of Eliza Seaward, I suggest, which initiated Georgiana's passionate engagement with *Seaward's Narrative*. Porter's contributions and influence in the writing, editing and publication of *Seaward's Narrative* are significant and I propose that it should therefore be included as part of her oeuvre.

The politics of the domestic in *Seaward's Narrative* are paramount and form the point from which it diverges from the other formulaic exploration narratives of the period. The genre of fictional exploration narratives has an interesting history, beginning with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719, and ending, arguably, with Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, published in 1837. Between these two seminal fictional works lies a proliferation of historical narratives in response to what historian James Williamson describes as 'the eighteenth-century's "romance of unknown lands and peoples" […] developing in European culture since Columbus', and the nineteenth-century's quest for empire.[27] In *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* Linda Colley suggests that, faced with the threat of war and mounting internal turmoil, British exploration and imperialism helped to forge a united identity and consequently the British people began to recognise themselves as a nation. Colley explains that 'Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above

[25] Fiona Price, 'Jane Porter and the Authorship of *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative*: Previously Unpublished Correspondence', *Notes & Queries,* 49/1, (March 2002), 56. (Letter 10 March 1831).
[26] Dorothy McMillan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* ed. by H.C.G Matthew and Brian Harrison, Vol. 44 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 960.
[27] Quoted in Bruce Robert Greenfield, *The Rhetoric of Discovery: British and American Exploration Narratives, 1760-1845 and American Renaissance Writing* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1985), p. 10.

all in response to conflict with the Other', thereby relieving anxieties related to their own internal fracturing and 'serving as a unifying agent'.[28] Brett McInelly, in 'Expanding Empires, Expanding Selves: Colonialism and the Novel', points to *Robinson Crusoe* and other exploration narratives as providing the British with a self-reference in the wake of their expanding empire.[29] The novel, *Robinson Crusoe* and the true narratives of explorers reinforced the need to be resourceful, self-sufficient and enterprising, to tame not only the natural environment but also the natives that were encountered in the newly colonised lands. John Richetti, in his 'Introduction' to *Robinson Crusoe*, writes that each newly discovered land became 'an opportunity for colonial expropriation, for development and improvement', what we may now consider exploitation. [30]

As documents of journeys to locations previously uncharted, exploration narratives not only aroused feelings of nationalism and patriotic fervour in their readers but, according to Lisa Gitelman in 'Arthur Gordon Pym and the Novel Narrative of Edgar Allan Poe', also provided much entertainment, with their lashings of 'mutiny, butchery, shipwreck, suffering, massacre and incredible adventures and discoveries below the eighty-fourth parallel'.[31] While there are specific points of departure in *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative*, there are also some similarities to its predecessor Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and successor, Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.* The male protagonists Robinson Crusoe, Edward Seaward and Gordon Pym, have an inherent desire to go to sea; all are shipwrecked after a violent hurricane, washed ashore on a seemingly deserted island, and are faced with the prospect of surviving with only bare essentials. The key point of departure for *Seaward's Narrative* from these novels and other exploration narratives, however, is the absence of overt brutality, especially with regard to the native people encountered. For example, in *Robinson Crusoe,* Crusoe gives a vivid account of the horror he felt when confronted by the natives:

> I perceiv'd by my perspective, two miserable wretches dragg'd from the boats, where it seems they were laid by, and were now brought out for the slaughter. I perceiv'd one of them fell […] and two or three others were immediately at work cutting him open for their cookery.[32]

Pym is similarly faced with murder, mutiny and mayhem, and his descriptions are

[28] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1701 – 1837* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 4-5. Also see Brett McInelly, 'Expanding Empires, Expanding Selves: Colonialism, the Novel, and Robinson Crusoe', *Studies in the Novel,* 35/1 (March 2003), 1-21 (p. 4).
[29] McInelly, p. 11.
[30] John Richetti, 'Introduction' to Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London, Penguin Classics, 2003), p. xxii.
[31] Lisa Gitelman, 'Arthur Gordon Pym and the Novel Narrative of Edgar Allan Poe', *Nineteenth Century Literature,* 47/3 (December 1992), 349-361 (p.352). Gitelman explains that the eighty-fourth parallel is the coordinate beyond which, at that time, no one had ever ventured, and therefore a region that was unknown. Edgar Allan Poe and Jules Verne both refer to the eighty-fourth parallel.
[32] Defoe, p.159.

equally graphic in their detail:

> A scene of the most horrible butchery ensued. The bound seamen were dragged to the gangway. Here the cook stood with an axe, striking each victim on the head as he was forced over the side of the vessel by the other mutineers.[33]

The natives in *Seaward's Narrative* on the other hand are friendly, hospitable and even obliging. Randel Helms scathingly writes that the natives in *Seaward's Narrative* are a 'white fantasy'.[34] I argue that the friendly and cooperative nature of the natives encountered by Edward and Eliza Seaward was fundamental to Porter's, and indeed William's, overarching philosophy of Christian virtue. Although at various moments in the text there are several bloody attacks by some natives and from pirates, the emphasis is on the eventual success of the Seawards and their islanders. Edward and Eliza are emphatic that defeat of the enemy must be achieved with little loss of life and that thanks must be offered to the Almighty for this deliverance.

However, as previously stated, the most important point of departure in *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative* is the presence of Eliza Seaward. Edward Seaward is shipwrecked with his wife, Eliza, and throughout the entire text, Eliza is pivotal in every decision, action and outcome. She is Edward's strength, his companion, and in all things his equal. Upon her death Seaward writes passionately:

> I feel her loss so deeply, that nothing less than the power of God could support me under my bereavement. But I live in the certain hope of meeting her again, and for ever, in the mansions of the blessed. (vii)

Eliza's presence highlights the politics of the domestic in the novel. In the 'Preface' Porter outlines the 'unpretending simplicity of the relation' between Edward and Eliza and assures the reader that this relationship exemplifies 'sound and truly British principles, religious and moral' (vi).

After their shipwreck, the first thing that Edward and Eliza must attend to is the provision of shelter and sustenance, which they accomplish through mutual support. They are practical, resourceful and always grateful for each small success. Gradually they begin to take delight in their isolation on the island. They are content with each other, applying their efforts each day to building shelter and garnering food from the land and sea. But above all, Edward and Eliza never take each other for granted and they never fail to observe the Sabbath or to give daily thanks to the Almighty for all

[33] Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (Boston: David R. Godine Publisher, 1973), p. 3.

[34] Helms, p. 573. The issue of slaves versus servants in *Seaward's Narrative* is an issue beyond the scope of this article. In the 'Preface', Porter draws attention to what she refers to as the 'home policy of the upright Governor of Seaward Island, with regard to its engrafted negro population' (p.ix) and continues to explain that she believes it to meet 'united demands of the right of property in the …last race of imported slaves'(p. ix).

his blessings. After 'their struggle for survival has been won' the first of the natives arrive on the island.[35] Edward and Eliza welcome them, sharing their food and shelter. With time more natives arrive, marriages take place, babies are born, more houses are built and a diversity of crops are grown. Small industry begins to develop and soon the Seawards find themselves at the helm of a thriving community. This growth naturally means some law enforcement is necessary, but Edward writes that:

> Our laws were few, but wholesome; and we desired to make our holy religion the rule of our conduct. In consequence, the population was healthy, orderly, industrious, and contented (p. 108).

Although the Seawards work tirelessly for the good of their growing community, they continue to be content in each other's company and on some occasions look back with fondness to the months that they were alone on their island. Edward reflects:

> And after the party had gone, my dear Eliza dressed herself in the old island garb of our former days […] I also dressed myself as in the habit of those times […] I gave my wife a pike in her hand, and then took up a basket […] We had religiously preserved these memorials of our early days […] then taking the hand of my beloved […] We bent our steps through the woodland region […] and soon we felt refreshed and joyous (p. 57).

Their pleasures are simple, as Edward further reflects:

> Sometimes we walked abroad in the cool of the morning on the beach, collecting shells; or, when the sun was high, reposed under the shade of one of our numerous fine trees, and there read (p. 139).

Eleven years after being shipwrecked on their island, with Eliza's health declining, the Seawards decide to return to England, having established a 'flourishing colony under the British flag'.[36] Their island, their 'home' of eleven years 'had grown up' however, and it was time to 'leave it to itself' (p. 321). As the island recedes into the distance, Eliza sighs heavily, recollecting that their island was 'to [them] an earthly paradise' (p. 332).

Although reading was one of Georgiana Molloy's greatest loves, the heavy burden of domestic duties meant that it was confined to Sundays, but this being the Sabbath, she felt it duty bound to 'read only books relating to religion'.[37] In a letter to her friend Helen Story in 1833, Georgiana wrote, 'I confine myself chiefly to these books for my conscience seems to say when reading any others, "Is your peace made

[35] Helms, p. 573.
[36] Lines, p. 189.
[37] Hasluck, p. 102.

with God?"'[38] Much to Georgiana's distress no church was yet built in the burgeoning colony of Augusta, although land was allotted for one in the original plans of the town.[39] Instead, all efforts were directed towards building barracks and cottages for the newly arriving soldiers and their wives. A temporary hospital was also quickly established along with a colonial store. Despite the lack of a church, Georgiana urged her husband to conduct church services in honour of the Sabbath. These were held on the veranda of their small cottage. They were, however, poorly attended and little reverence was paid. Georgiana wrote desperately to Helen:

> I can give you no idea of the open state of regardless wickedness that […] reigns here. [Captain] Molloy ordered an observance of the Sabbath from the first of our arrival. But all is heard as if not heard; and the soldiers' wives very often quit the service in the middle of it.[40]

Georgiana was often left alone for many months. Without a servant, husband or friends, Georgiana put all her efforts into creating a home. In those early days in the new colony, Georgiana thought of nothing but returning to England and her beloved home, Rosneath. Writing to her sister Elizabeth in 1832, Georgiana described her new surroundings as the 'unbounded limits of thickly clothed dark green forests where nothing can be described to feast the imagination'.[41] Her loneliness was not only due to the frequent absences of her husband, but also to alienation from the other women in the small community. Interested in philosophical and religious concerns, Georgiana found no-one among the soldiers' wives with whom she could discuss the things that interested her most. In a poignant letter to her dear friend, Margaret Dunlop, in 1833, Georgiana wrote how her 'head aches', explaining to Margaret that:

> I have all the clothes to put away from the wash; baby to put to bed; make tea and drink it without milk as they shot our cow for a trespass; read prayers […] I wish I had you here to help me.[42]

As resident Magistrate, Captain John Molloy was frequently required to attend to business in the Swan River Colony, leaving Georgiana, and their rapidly growing family, to fend for themselves. Georgiana hated being left alone and the Captain was equally discontented at leaving his family, especially as relations with the indigenous people were on precarious terms. However, in his absence Georgiana took over the duties of the Magistrate, in addition to her domestic chores and caring for her young children. During her time in the role of Magistrate Georgiana was required to conduct a funeral service for her one-time servant, Kitty Ludlow. In a letter to Helen Story Georgiana recorded the distress that organising this funeral caused her, not only because of her deep concern for the spiritual salvation of Kitty, but also because the

[38] Ibid., p. 103.
[39] Ibid., p. 102.
[40] Ibid., p.102.
[41] Ibid., p.109.
[42] Hasluck, p.135.

intense December heat meant that the body began to decompose quite rapidly. Georgiana wrote that Kitty's poor frame 'was so highly decomposed it made two of the bearers ill for some days.'[43] During another of her husband's absences, the Colony's doctor, in a drunken state, entered the house uninvited. Although Georgiana wrote that she was not alarmed by the incident, she was deeply concerned about the widespread drunkenness that was evident in the small colony. In his biography of Georgiana Molloy, William Lines records that although later counselling the doctor, Georgiana feared her efforts were in vain. As with the licentiousness rife amongst soldiers and their wives, Georgiana also had grave concern for the salvation of the Aboriginal people she encountered.

In 1834, some four years after settling in Augusta, with three small children and Magistrate duties to attend to, Georgiana wrote home that even reading a religious text on a Sunday had become a luxury she could barely afford. She wrote: 'I never open a book, and if I can read a chapter on Sundays, it is quite a treat to have so much leisure'.[44] However, in December of that year, after another long exhausting day, it would appear that Georgiana found a rare moment to sit by the water's edge, hoping to sight the vessel that would bring her husband home to her, and read a narrative which 'painted a sweet picture of conjugal bliss and domestic contentment'.[45] Georgiana found great delight in this story about a shipwrecked couple, who 'considered their island an earthly paradise', and 'who took seriously their duty to care for it, to dress it and keep it'.[46]

It is unclear how Georgiana came to be in possession of the novel. Although she and her husband brought with them many books, given that *Seaward's Narrative* was published in 1831 it could not have been among their collection, as they left England in 1829. Both Georgiana and her husband were avid readers, despite different tastes in subject matter. Captain Molloy was very fond of reading for pleasure rather than 'spiritual enlightenment' and occupied any spare time with reading exploration narratives, especially those by fellow soldiers and sailors.[47] One of Captain Molloy's favourite books was *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade* by John Kincaid, published in 1830. The book was sent to the Captain by Georgiana's sister Mary. However, in a letter to her sister Eliza, Georgiana said that she did not intend to read the book, despite Kincaid being an ex-officer of her husband's, because on perusing it she noted it contained the occasional '*damn*', writing that because of the 'apparent language…I do not intend to read it'.[48] In contrast to her husband Georgiana preferred to read religious tracts, favourite books being Milton's *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained* and Robert Pollock's *The Course of Time*, a collection of religious poems first published in 1828. Pollock's collection was sent to Georgiana by

[43] Lines, p.187.
[44] 'The Letters of Georgiana Molloy', p. 48. (Letter December 1834).
[45] Lines, p.189.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Lines, p. 143. Lines notes in his biography that John Molloy's collection included Jonathon Leach's *Rough Notes of the Life of an old Soldier* (1831) and John Kincaid's *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade* (1830).
[48] Hasluck, p. 128.

her sister Mary, who wrote that Georgiana would much enjoy the discursive and pedagogical nature of the verses it contained.[49] I can only deduce from her letters that the most likely scenario for Georgiana having possession of *Seaward's Narrative* is that it was sent to her by a friend, or family member in England. No matter how Georgiana came into possession of the novel, it is note-worthy that within three years of publication its reach extended as far as Australia, and not only that, to the remote south-west of Western Australia.

The fictional Eliza Seaward had many things in common with Georgiana. Both were devoutly religious and both were young brides when they followed their husbands to begin new lives in far away places: Captain Molloy and Georgiana to the Swan River colony in Australia, Edward and Eliza to Jamaica. Marriage for Georgiana was sacred, and like Eliza Seaward she believed its existence and maintenance were vital to the wellbeing of society. Like Eliza also, Georgiana was strong, determined, independent and active. As a wife, Georgiana wished to be a helpmate to her husband, valuing friendship as the foundation of her marriage. This mirrors the fictional narrative of the relationship between Eliza and Edward, one that Georgiana wished to emulate. Just prior to her marriage to Captain Molloy Georgiana wrote to him:

> I saw in some of the papers that the Rifle Corps was not to go abroad and I hope that the report is correct, for whatever you may say of the nothingness of so long a voyage, I cannot bring my untravelled mind to regard it so lightly, and as I always consider you are one of my greatest friends, I should be glad to retain you on this side of the Atlantic.[50]

Moreover, the letter highlights another similarity between Georgiana and Eliza. Both women had not travelled outside their native England prior to setting forth as young brides and, while willing and happy to be following their husbands, they were both saddened to leave their family and friends. As with Eliza, Georgiana took her role as wife and helpmate very seriously. Captain Molloy, writing to Mary Dunlop just after his marriage to Georgiana, referred to the seriousness of his new young wife. He wrote:

> She is a very dear creature, Mary, and really seems happy although she is separated from her dear friends at Keppoch. She is quite notable in the way of equipping herself and has accomplished the whole of her affairs in as quiet and easy a manner as if she had been a wife for two years' standing.[51]

Throughout *Seaward's Narrative*, Edward Seaward refers to his wife as his constant companion and helpmate, and is in admiration of her hard labour. He is

[49] Lines, p. 140.
[50] Hasluck, p. 17.
[51] Hasluck, p. 45.

always in awe of his wife's industriousness:

> Having finished dinner, my industrious Eliza with the old basket for a pattern, made the frame-work of a new one; and I, never so happy as when employed near her, began to plan a fish-pot (p. 157).

When not busy with domestic chores, both Eliza and Georgiana read, especially religious texts, and Milton is a favourite of each. Edward Seaward notes that:

> My dear Eliza's favourite was the *Paradise Lost* by Milton… From this sublime work she would sometimes read a fine passage to us and always with great pathos; for her soul was in the subject, and she therefore did the author justice (p. 139).

For Georgiana and Eliza, the Sabbath was sacred and adherence to it imperative. However, Georgiana did not have the same mutual support either from her husband or the other members of the colony, as Eliza had from Edward and the settlers on their island. Captain Molloy did not share his wife's religious fervour, while he was, however, happy to observe the Sabbath. Georgiana, in a letter to Helen, exclaimed that she 'has no Physician here to apply to' and constantly prayed 'for some faithful minister' with whom to share her devoutness. [52]

Despite the austerity of the conditions, both women found pleasure and solace in planting, tending and cultivating their gardens, especially their vegetable gardens from which they could reap sustenance both nutritionally and spiritually. Georgiana also enjoyed flower gardening and proudly wrote to her mother in England that she was 'the only lady in the colony possessing a flower garden'.[53] The fictional Eliza shares her love of gardening with her husband, working side by side to produce enough food for their sustenance, as Edward recalls:

> I again went to work with my spade; during which [Eliza] cut the yams: and before noon-tide, we had planted a good space with both yams and coccos [sic] (p. 123).

Given that both women name Milton's *Paradise Lost* as among their favourite books, it is of little surprise that gardening is such a deep passion for them both. Milton's text must have resonated loudly for Eliza and Georgiana as they experienced the physical and spiritual struggle of being cast adrift from their beloved England. The lushness of England is replaced by a land that is 'empty and challenging', a place where the weather seemed continually hot and there is a 'constant irritation of flies, fleas and mosquitoes'.[54] While Adam and Eve's 'departure from Paradise is tearful', they gradually begin to realise that their 'quest is to restore a Paradisal order', to

[52] Lines, p.142.
[53] Ibid., p.131.
[54] Hasluck, p. 82

regain Paradise.[55] So too Eliza and Georgiana set about restoring order, planting their garden, growing their crops and finding delight in their new Eden. Two years after arriving in Augusta, Georgiana wrote to her family at Rosneath that although to the emigrant eye 'nothing can be described to feast the imagination', with her domestic eye she now looks upon her 'home' as a 'very beautiful place'.[56] From *Paradise Lost*, Georgiana learnt 'the virtues of patience not passivity, of enlightened learning not submissive ignorance' and the importance of finding 'Paradise within thee, happier far'.[57] Stella Revard, in 'Eve and the Doctrine of Responsibility in *Paradise Lost*', points out that in Book XI Eve 'withdraws her hand from her husband's hand and goes alone to tend her garden'.[58] While Eliza shared her love of gardening with her husband, like Eve Georgiana had to tend to her garden alone.

Scholars of Georgiana all record the turning point in her life to be the receipt of a letter from Captain James Mangles, a prominent London horticulturist, requesting her to collect, label and send to him as many varieties of native seeds as she could gather.[59] After visiting the Swan River colony, Mangles took a professional interest in the native vegetation in the Augusta area and, on the advice of some friends, wrote to Georgiana with his request. Georgiana took up the challenge from this stranger with relish and worked tirelessly collecting and identifying seeds, even after the tragic drowning of her only son, John, at the age of nineteen months. Georgiana's work and correspondence with Mangles became, along with the maintenance of her family, the focus of her life until her premature death six years later.

Although Mangles first wrote to Georgiana in 1837, she began to find purpose and passion in her life earlier than this, when reading the story of Edward and Eliza Seaward. It was after reading *Seaward's Narrative* that she began to take positive steps in building her new life. Thus, when she received Mangles's letter some three years later, Georgiana was receptive to the possibilities it offered. It is also clear from her letters and diary that after reading the novel Georgiana made significant changes in her life, the most fundamental being her request to Captain Molloy not to leave her and the children again for any long periods. She requested he remain at home to help with the household chores and attend to his work as the resident Magistrate. Captain Molloy agreed to his wife's request, promising never to leave her alone unless absolutely necessary. It is clear from reading Georgiana's biography that she wished for her and her husband to live with, and for each other, in the same way that Edward and Eliza Seaward did. Evidence of Captain Molloy's compliance with his wife's wishes is found in Georgiana's letter to Helen Story, writing how her husband ordered her to bed on seeing her exhaustion with caring for their sick daughter: 'And he', wrote Georgiana, 'dearest creature that he is, sat up with Sabina, who remained in the

[55] *The Short Oxford History of English Literature,* ed. by Andrew Sanders (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 233-34.
[56] Hasluck, p.129 (Letter 7 November 1832)
[57] Sanders, p. 233.
[58] Stella, P. Revard, 'Eve and the Doctrine of Responsibility in *Paradise Lost*', *PMLA,* 88/1 (January 1973), 69-78 (p. 69).
[59] See particularly, Jessica White, 'Efflorescence: The Letters of Georgiana Molloy', *Hecate*, 28/2 (2002), 176-190.

same state till about three, when [finally] the medicine took effect'.[60] Georgiana also expressed to her husband the need for a servant to assist in the care of the children and to relieve them of some of the many daily chores required to be done. Molloy agreed, and even promised that if necessary he would pay the passage for someone, and should they prove themselves loyal and hardworking he would grant them a piece of land. Georgiana was delighted and wrote to Helen: 'I shall be most thankful for a sensible and pious young woman, or even a widow, that would […] assist me in any way, either as a servant or companion'.[61]

In *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative*, Edward and Eliza create an empire in miniature, a representation of England. After reading the story of the Seawards, Georgiana also began to create her representation of the home she had left behind in England. Delys Bird, in her essay 'Gender and Landscape: Australian Colonial Women Writers', states that in creating her garden, Georgiana began to adjust to her new environment and even began domesticating it by planting an English garden in the remote, arid land which she now inhabited. In addition to English plants, Georgiana also began growing Australian native plants in her garden and by doing so '[civilised] the landscape, creating a domestic hybrid'.[62] Bird believes that it was in this way that Georgiana began to integrate into her new environment. Importantly, Bird concludes her essay by saying that for women, and for Georgiana in particular, 'domestic concerns remain central to their relationship to the land and this allows a closer relationship with that land […] which is different from a typically masculine, imperialist, exploitative relationship'.[63]

The powerful presence of Eliza in *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative* in essence created a blueprint from which Georgiana was able to recognise the importance of the domestic by accepting, and integrating into, the harsh and unfamiliar landscape. Georgiana read the domestic space in *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative*, 'that patch of earth that she scraped and swept until it was smooth', as a metaphor for the national, the England left behind.[64] The story of Edward and Eliza Seaward was for Georgiana Molloy a bridge to a new beginning because, as William Lines writes in his biography of Georgiana, it gave her 'a glimpse of a heartbreaking perfection', a perfection that, I believe, Georgiana had not been able to achieve thus far, but which she strove to achieve from that point on.[65] The fictional heroine, Eliza Seaward, gave to Georgiana the key to her own liberation, a frame of reference in which she was able to flourish and succeed against, at times, overwhelming odds. Indeed, on hearing of her death, the eminent horticulturalist, George Hailes, wrote '[n]ot one in ten thousand who go out into distant lands has done what she did for the Gardens of her Native Country'.[66] Georgiana succeeded in creating not just a garden but a 'home'.

[60] Pickering, p. 52.
[61] Ibid., p. 53.
[62] Delys Bird, 'Gender and Landscape: Australian Colonial Women Writers', *New Literature Review*, 18 (Winter 1989), 20-36 (p. 32).
[63] Bird, p. 34.
[64] Kate Grenville, *The Secret River* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2005), p. 149.
[65] Lines, p.189.
[66] Hasluck, p. 311.

Bibliography

Adams, Michael, 'Jane Porter' in *British Romantic Novelists, 1798 – 1832*. Dictionary of Literary Biography, ed. by Bradford Mudge (London: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1992)

Anonymous, '*Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative of his Shipwreck, and Consequence Discovery of Certain Islands in the Caribbean Sea: With a Detail of Many Extraordinary and Highly Interesting Events of His Life From the Year 1733 to* 1749, edited by Miss Jane Porter', Art VIII, *London Quarterly Review* (1832), 480-507

Armstrong, Nancy, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

Bird, Delys, 'Gender and Landscape: Australian Colonial Women Writers', *New Literature Review,* Vol. 18 (Winter 1989), 20-36

Colley, Linda, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1701 – 1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

Defoe, Daniel, *Robinson Crusoe,* ed. with an introduction by John Richetti (London, Penguin Classics, 2003)

George, Rosemary Marangoly, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (London: University of California Press, 1999)

Gitelman, Lisa, 'Arthur Gordon Pym and the Novel Narrative of Edgar Allan Poe', *Nineteenth Century Literature,* Vol. 47/3 (December 1992), 349-361

Greenfield, Bruce Robert, *The Rhetoric of Discovery: British and American Exploration Narratives, 1760-1845 and American Renaissance Writing* (unpublished thesis, Ann Arbor, UMI, 1985)

Grenville, Kate, *The Secret River* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2005)

Hasluck, Alexandra, *Georgiana Molloy: Portrait with Background* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2002) [First published by Oxford University Press in 1955].

Helms, Randel, 'Another Source for Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym', *American Literature,* 41/4 (Jan 1970), 572-575

Lines, William, *An All Consuming Passion* (NSW, Aust.: Allen & Unwin, 1994)

Mandler, Peter, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (London: Yale University Press, 2006)

McInelly, Brett, 'Expanding Empires, Expanding Selves: Colonialism, the Novel, and Robinson Crusoe', *Studies in the Novel,* 35/1, (March 2003), 1-21

McMillan, Dorothy, 'Jane Porter', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* ed. by H.C.G Matthew and Brian Harrison, Vol.44, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 958-960

Pickering, W.G., ed., 'The Letters of Georgiana Molloy', *The Western Australian Historical Society,* Part IV, (1929)

Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (Boston, David R. Godine Publisher, 1973)

Porter, Jane, ed., *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative of His Shipwreck, and Consequence Discovery of Certain Islands in the Caribbean Sea: With a Detail of Many Extraordinary and Highly Interesting Events of His Life From the Year 1733 to 1749, as Written in His own Diary* [1831] (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971)

Price, Fiona Louise, 'Jane Porter and the Authorship of Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative', *Notes and Queries,* 49/1, (March 2005), 55-57

Revard, Stella, P., 'Eve and the Doctrine of Responsibility in *Paradise Lost*', *PMLA,* 88/1 (January 1973), 69-78

Sanders, Andrew, ed., *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)

Strehle, Susan, *Transnational Women's Fiction: Unsettling Home and Homeland* (New York: Palgrave, 2008)

White Jessica, 'Efflorescence: The Letters of Georgiana Molloy', *Hecate*, Vol 28/2, (2002), 176-190