

INGIBJÖRG ÁGÚSTSDÓTTIR  
UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

**Surrender and Sacrifice:  
Imperial Subjugation and the Coloured  
Mistress in Robin Jenkins's *The Expatriates*  
and "Imelda and the Miserly Scot"**

**1. Introduction**

The Scottish novelist Robin Jenkins (1912–2005) was highly prolific, publishing thirty novels (one posthumously) and two collections of short stories. Jenkins lived in Scotland for most of his life, except for three periods of some years each in the 1950s and 1960s when he worked in Afghanistan, Spain and Sabah (now Borneo). Jenkins had a great passion for his native country; while he felt exasperated at the Scots' lack of political confidence and the seeming absence of true national unity, he nevertheless argued strongly for the duty of Scottish novelists to seek fictional inspiration in the people and culture of Scotland, no matter how ordinary (Jenkins 1955: 7–10; Jenkins 1982: 11; Jenkins 1996: ix–x; Ágústsdóttir 1999: 14–15). This focus on Scottish subject matter is clearly manifested in Jenkins's fiction, the majority of which is set in Scotland and deals with Scottish themes. However, while living abroad Jenkins started to write novels set abroad, publishing the first of these in 1960; here there is also a specific Scottish resonance, as many of Jenkins's expatriates are Scots whose morality and integrity is put to the test by inherent national prejudices that emerge when being exposed to unfamiliar settings, circumstances and peo-

ple. Jenkins published a total of eight novels and one collection of short stories that are set abroad; all of these, except *Leila* (1995), are published during the period 1960 to 1974. Although the novels and stories that are based on his years abroad make up almost a third of Jenkins's overall achievement, these have not received much critical attention, as pointed out in 2010 by Bernard Sellin (Sellin 2010: n.p.). This is the case even though some of these texts can be counted among the finest of Jenkins's writing.

A central feature of Jenkins's writing is the intense examination of the moral inconsistencies and hypocrisies of human nature; his fiction forces us to see ourselves as we really are, and shocks us into recognising our moral weaknesses. Throughout his work, Jenkins toys with the idea of attainable moral perfection, that pure goodness can exist in a world of selfishness and greed. At the same time, his narratives stress the near impossibility of achieving such goodness through showing that humanity is by nature morally fallible and limited.<sup>1</sup> Experiencing other cultures and environments during his years abroad provided Jenkins with a different angle from which to address these central moral questions. Thus, in the words of Glenda Norquay, Jenkins's travels "allowed him to develop further the themes of moral alienation and the limits of human understanding which were central to the concerns of his Scottish novels" (Norquay 1985: 269). In many of these "foreign" texts, Jenkins explores racial prejudice and cultural conflict within the framework of the dubious legacy of British imperialism; indeed, his moral questioning is even further manifested when presented in the ambiguous and controversial context of racial difference, colonial subjugation, and the redefinition of identity and purpose among British expatriates in a postcolonial world.

Jenkins's foreign fiction clearly indicates the author's critique of the imperial enterprise while posing many significant questions in relation to Britain's relationship with its former colonies, and about

---

1 While morality and the quest for pure goodness are inherently linked with Jenkins's interrogation of racial difference, the legacy of imperialism, and other themes dealt with in this paper, Jenkins's moral questioning is nevertheless not the main focus here, as this aspect of Jenkins's writing has been amply discussed elsewhere. See, for example: Ágústsdóttir 2001; Ágústsdóttir 2006; Baker 2010; Miller 2008; Norquay 1985; Norquay 1986; Norquay 1987; Thompson 1963.

Scotland's part in the British Empire.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the strong focus on Empire in his work—or on the aftermath of Empire—makes it surprising that Douglas S. Mack does not mention Jenkins at all in his book on Scottish fiction and the British Empire (Mack 2006). It is important in the context of Jenkins's outlook on Empire that the beginning of the twentieth century saw the British Empire as “the envy of the other great powers, the greatest empire the world had ever seen” (Kitchen 1996: 48). Born at the end of the period of Britain's imperial heyday,<sup>3</sup> Jenkins grew up during World War I and the early interwar years. His most formative years as a young adult must therefore have been within the later interwar period. This is important because this period saw the rise of a new debate that was characterised by “a growing uneasiness that much of the talk about the moral mission in the Empire was hypocritical” (Kitchen 1996: 75). Jenkins was undoubtedly aware of this debate, and must have done some independent stock-taking on the moral values of imperialism during these and the following years, which saw British imperial policy often marked by uncertainty, upheaval, and political and individual disagreement (Kitchen 1996: 61–122). In the 1950s and 1960s, the Empire was dying;<sup>4</sup> as a result, Jenkins's years abroad fell within a period which was marked by the rapid decline of the British Empire. Although Sabah in Malaysia is the only former British colony where Jenkins lived during his years abroad, British influence had been considerable also in Afghanistan, as is made evident in Jenkins's novels set there, such as *Some Kind of Grace* (1960) and *Dust on the Paw* (1961). Interestingly, Jenkins's first year in Sabah (1963) was the same year in which Sabah became

---

2 It should be noted here that Scotland's status within Britain has been seen by some as inferior and comparable to that of the colonies, most notably in Michael Hechter's study of “internal colonialism” in the British Isles, which argues for the “incorporation of the Celtic periphery into England [...] as being imperial in nature” (Hechter 1975: 65; see also Finlay 1998 and Schoene 1995). This line of argument was already being made during the Scottish Literary Renaissance in the 1930s, and Jenkins is very likely to have been aware of such ideas. However, the Scots were also very active participants in building the British Empire and were proud of this (see Finlay 1998: 28). These facts make Scotland's role within the British Empire extremely dual and paradoxical in nature, a fact which is evidently felt by Jenkins, since several of his foreign stories emphasise the complicated relationship between the Scots as *colonised* and the Scots as *coloniser*.

3 See Kitchen 1996: 43–60. Kitchen terms the years 1876–1914 as ‘The Heyday of Empire’.

4 Kitchen deals with this period in a chapter entitled “The End of the Empire.” See Kitchen 1996: 123–142.

independent by joining with the new state of Malaysia, which came into existence that year (Lloyd 1996: 360–361).<sup>5</sup> This political development is clearly felt in Jenkins’s Borneo stories, where the problematic change from colonial dependence to self-government is made explicit. While the newly independent country is taking tentative first steps in self-government, the British expatriates portrayed are faced with a new and ambiguous set of circumstances: having previously represented the governing party, they are now subject to the power of current rulers, yet the expatriates still hold power over the natives due to both their relative affluence and superior social position, on one hand,<sup>6</sup> and the fact that many natives are still uncertain of their position in their relationship with their former masters, on the other. This means that Jenkins’s treatment of racial prejudice and cultural conflict is also interlaced with an interrogation into the meaning of class and material divisions within a foreign context.<sup>7</sup>

The foreign fiction clearly suggests that Jenkins was sympathetic towards natives and colonies subjected to British rule,<sup>8</sup> as throughout the moral value of imperial appropriation and exploitation of colonies’ resources is questioned. Simultaneously, Jenkins’s treatment of racial difference emphasises and criticises British expatriates’ Eurocentric arrogance and prejudice towards natives. In many of Jenkins’s foreign narratives, we see the imposing of a British imperial “truth” upon the natives of countries like Borneo and Afghanistan, where British expatriates (and former colonialists)

5 The British gained influence in Sabah in 1877 when a private syndicate obtained land grants from the Sultans of Brunei and Sulu. After Japanese occupation during World War II, Sabah was granted British crown colony status in 1946, but became independent in 1963 by joining with Malaysia (see “Sabah”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*).

6 It is made clear in Jenkins’s stories that while living in Borneo, the expatriates hold a social position which they would not maintain in their home country. This is a major reason why Borneo is such an attraction for them.

7 It should be noted here that other prevalent themes in Jenkins’s fiction are the effects of class division and the injustices of capitalist ideology, of which he is highly critical.

8 In my correspondence with Jenkins in December 2000, I asked Jenkins about his opinion of the British Empire. His reply was ambiguous and non-committal. Nevertheless, it clearly indicates his deeply sceptical, if not critical, views of the imperial mission: “As for my views on the British and their empire I’d have to think longer than I wish to dig them out. Recently I was offered an O.B.E. and swithered mightily about accepting it. I couldn’t see myself as an Officer of the British Empire, but in the end I decided the honour – if it was one – was for Scottish Literature and not really for me. All my life I have had an instinctive sympathy for the underdog” (Robin Jenkins, letter to the author, 14 December 2000).

see the native culture as backward and barbaric, much in line with Edward W. Said's definitions on European ideas about the Orient (Said 1995: 7). Also, while Jenkins's colonialists feel that Western standards should replace "backward" Eastern ways of thinking, they nevertheless feel threatened if the natives become too similar to their colonial superiors. In Homi K. Bhabha's terms, this reflects a "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha 1994: 86, his emphasis). This is seen, for example, in Jenkins's *The Holy Tree* (1969), where the native Eking's accusation against expatriate Harold Elphin is hushed up. Eking is seen to have no right to criticise the European Elphin because Eking is *only* a backward native, and his mimicking Western ways in writing open letters of complaint to the newspapers is simply dismissed as revolutionary: "It did not matter whether what he had written was true or false [...] All that mattered was that no native should be allowed to accuse Englishmen, especially in their own language" (Jenkins 1969: 78).

Jenkins's foreign stories thus lend themselves easily to a post-colonial reading, as these texts explore the ways in which fixed ideas of racial difference and Western cultural advantage determine British or European attitudes towards their formerly colonial subjects. The concept of Eastern people as "a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves" (Said 1995: 35) is echoed throughout Jenkins's foreign stories. Moreover, quite a few of these are concerned with inter-racial relationships and prejudice towards half-caste children, and here Jenkins shows up British (or Scottish) racism as a disease that in most cases is incurable. Two texts which showcase this approach well are the novel *The Expatriates* (1971) and the short story "Imelda and the Miserly Scot" from the collection *A Far Cry From Bowmore & Other Stories* (1973), and to which this discussion now turns.

*The Expatriates* and "Imelda and the Miserly Scot" are in many ways similar stories. They are mostly set in post-independence Kalimantan (Borneo), have Scottish protagonists, and are clearly focused on the racial divide which exists between white expatriates and natives. Both narratives satirise the expatriate community, with

its virulent colour prejudice, moral decadence, illicit affairs, neighbourly envy, and thriving gossip, both portray clear imperialistically imposed hegemony of white over coloured, and both feature sudden and untimely death of main characters. Most significantly, both these stories are focused on the relationship of white men with coloured women, and through these relationships Jenkins explores issues that are clearly pertinent to postcolonial as well as feminist discourse. Although the two relationships have altogether different resolutions, their sexual and psychological dynamics are clearly symbolic of relations between East and West, or between colony and Empire. While an obvious parallel is established between the white man's coloured mistress and the native as subjected to the power of Empire, these two inter-racial affairs also demonstrate the power of patriarchal dominance which feminist theorists have long sought to eradicate.

## 2. Postcolonialism, feminism and the coloured mistress

Several critics have argued for the relationship of feminism and postcolonialism. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin point out the parallels between women and colonized people, and the shared features of feminist and postcolonial discourse:

[women] share with colonized races and peoples an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression, and like them they have been forced to articulate their experiences in the language of their oppressors. Women, like post-colonial peoples, have had to construct a language of their own when their only available "tools" are those of the "colonizer." [...]

Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant, and early feminist theory, like early nationalist post-colonial criticism, sought to invert the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, a female tradition or traditions in place of a male-dominated canon. (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 174–175)

Arguments of critics such as Sara Suleri suggest a similar correlation. Thus Suleri argues that “both the categories of ‘woman’ and ‘race’ assume the status of metaphors, so that each rhetoric of oppression can serve equally as a mirrored allegory for the other” (Suleri 1995: 276). Additionally, some aspects of Kadiatu Kanneh’s paper on “Feminism and the Colonial Body” emphasise the symbolical meaning of imperialism as a male power dominating a “female” dependency. Kanneh states that the “feminising of colonised territory is, of course, a trope in colonial thought” (Kanneh 1995: 346) and that the “discourse of rape between coloniser, and colonised country” is familiar in these terms (*ibid*, 347). This line of thought is confirmed by Ania Loomba, who points out that “from the beginning of the colonial period till its end (and beyond), female bodies symbolise the conquered land” (Loomba 1998: 152).

Furthermore, some aspects of postcolonial theory itself are closely related to feminist thinking. For instance, it is clear that some of Edward Said’s arguments relate to the kind of oppression practised within a patriarchal power structure. Therefore Said’s assertion that imperialism and colonialism are both “supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination” (Said 1993: 8, his emphasis) clearly reflects those aspects of patriarchal oppression that are first and foremost engendered by the belief that it is the nature of women to be controlled by men. Moreover, Said’s classification of West and East into the “One” and the “Other” and his general thesis of Occidental self-assumed knowledge as equalling power over the “subject” Orient mirrors the typical patriarchal classification of men and women into “form / matter”, “intellect / body”, “activity / passivity”, “the One / the Other.” Importantly, also, the relationship of West and East was often seen as that of a strong and weak partner: “Many terms were used to express the relation: [...] The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (Said 1995: 40). We can very easily relate most aspects of this categorisation to the long-standing patriarchal conception of women as subordinate, irrational and “fallen.” Just as woman has had her actions, feelings, and thoughts defined according to male, phallo-

centric convictions, so have the Orient and the colonies been absorbed, analysed, and constructed by Western and imperial ideologies.

It is clear therefore that numerous elements of both feminist and postcolonial theory point towards an association between the two, especially in terms of the marginalisation of women and colonised people in the context of patriarchy and Empire. Furthermore, the idea of “double colonisation”, which emphasises that “women in formerly colonised societies were *doubly* colonised by both imperial and patriarchal ideologies” (Ashcroft et al. 1995: 250, their emphasis) has great bearing on this relationship between patriarchy and Empire. This correlation between feminist and postcolonial ideas is very relevant to the stories by Jenkins that are the subject of this paper. First of all, the relationships of Ronald McDonald with the Sino-Dusun Jenny in *The Expatriates*, and of Andrew McAndrick with the Celebes-born Imelda in “Imelda and the Miserly Scot,” are arguably epitomes of the existing correlation between imperial and male subjugation of the native and female subject. Although Jenny and Imelda’s respective positions as McDonald’s and McAndrick’s mistresses differ in that Jenny is McDonald’s servant while Imelda is more simply McAndrick’s live-in mistress, both Scotsmen view their women more as property than as their sweethearts, obviously chiefly because of Jenny’s and Imelda’s colour and native origin. Accordingly, the imperial power, although it has already withdrawn its influence in that Kalimantan is now an independent country, is here exercised through the means of a white man’s sexual dominance over a native woman. Being Eastern, and thereby accustomed to the power structure of patriarchy in their own society, Jenny and Imelda are thus subjected to and marginalised by both patriarchy and Empire; they are doubly colonised—subjugated by two prevalent ideologies.

McDonald’s and McAndrick’s sense of sexually possessing their mistresses is obviously strengthened by their strong assumption of racial superiority and their deep-set prejudice against dark coloured skin, and these sentiments are further manifested in other British characters in the two narratives. There are obvious and clear-cut borders between white and coloured in the communities presented.

Even though Kalimantan has gained independence from Britain, most of the British expatriate characters of both stories are shown to consider themselves superior to the Dusun, Chinese, Malay, and Indian population of Kalimantan. Furthermore, clear antagonism to inter-racial marriages is emphasised in the disdain shown to Tom Bannerman by his fellow expatriates in *The Expatriates*. Married to a native woman, Bannerman is thought to have degraded himself and is accordingly more or less ignored by his compatriots, a fact rightly referred to as Bannerman's "immolation [...] at the stake of human prejudice" (Jenkins 1971: 94). This attitude is clearly reflected in McDonald and McAndrick themselves: both men contemplate and even mention to their mistress the idea of marrying her, only to reject the possibility straight afterwards because of their deep-rooted racial prejudice and their fear that they will be rejected by the white community for "debasing" themselves in such a manner. It is suggested that both men have some feelings for their mistresses, and yet these feelings cannot dispel their inherent racism and social cowardice. Therefore McDonald's feeling of shame at having a child with a coloured woman causes his first cowardly desertion of Jenny and their daughter;<sup>9</sup> his lack of moral courage is obviously fuelled by that part of him to which Jenkins refers as "the white colonialist" (Jenkins 1971: 159). Similarly, McAndrick's occasional feelings of tenderness for Imelda are undermined by his colour prejudice; waking up and seeing her face beside him, he is "startled and dismayed by its darkness [...] and knows] then that his hope of her somehow becoming light enough in colour to pass as white was a cheat" (Jenkins 1973: 43). For both men, white is the desired and superior colour of skin and not even their love for a native woman will change this fact.

The representation of the coloured mistress in Jenkins's two narratives also carries serious implications of racial, economic, and sexual exploitation. Significantly, McDonald commences his rela-

---

9 This actually refers to when McDonald had gone back to Scotland to live there, a plot detail relayed through flashbacks in the narrative but which really happened before the beginning of the story. The novel focuses on McDonald's return to Kalimantan with his new Scottish bride in order to bring Nancy back to Scotland. Their arrival in Kalimantan causes some upheaval among members of the British community, and Jenny's eventual surrender of their daughter to McDonald has unforeseen consequences.

tionship with his “amah” (his servant Jenny) by raping her; symbolically, this episode stands for the imperialist take-over of a colony and the following exploitation of its resources for the benefit of the colonialist and Empire. Moreover, this incident highlights the function of rape as a tool of oppression, and emphasises also the importance of the discourse of rape in the context of both patriarchy and Empire. Surprisingly, though, McDonald’s “drunken sprawling upon this [Jenny’s] soft brown fragrant body” (Jenkins 1971: 60) results in Jenny’s submissive and unconditional love for him. She sees herself as McDonald’s “exclusive property, to be kept for him in cold storage for ever, and for him alone, until she dies” (Jenkins 1971: 139). The novel shows Jenny as inferior to McDonald first because she is an Eastern woman, culturally trained to view men as superior beings, secondly because she is his servant, and thirdly because she is a native of a former British colony. Her status of inferiority to McDonald is therefore threefold in nature, and their relationship is clearly based on McDonald’s superiority, Jenny’s inferiority, and McDonald’s possession of Jenny as woman, servant, and native. It follows, of course, that McDonald sees himself as Jenny’s lord and master, since he reflects that he “had been, still was, her lord as well as her lover” (Jenkins 1971: 176). The reference to McDonald as Lord Ronald, inspired by the Scottish ballad “Leezie Lindsay” that he usually sings when in drunken expatriate company, adds an ironic dimension to the power given to McDonald over his mistress, as the ballad tells the story of a poor lass being wooed by a Highland laird who promises her a life of riches if she marries him. For McDonald and Jenny, however, there has been no such happy outcome, as McDonald deserted Jenny and married a white woman once he had returned to Scotland.

As can be seen from the above, therefore, *The Expatriates* can be interpreted as reinforcing both the patriarchal and the imperial structure, rather than opposing or deconstructing it. The novel’s outcome, as discussed in more detail below, enforces this reading still further. It has to be remembered, though, that Jenkins’s approach to the issue of inter-racial relations is satirical, as irony is a major hallmark of his writing; indeed, the novel has a very strong female focus in presenting major female characters, some of them

strong and independent women, on whom much of the narrative is focused. In this respect *The Expatriates* is very different from “Imelda and the Miserly Scot,” in which the narrative focus of the short story rests almost entirely on McAndrick who generally reveals a disrespectful attitude towards women and sees them mostly as sexual beings supposed to give him pleasure. This much more masculine and even chauvinist focus—albeit with a generous dash of irony—further establishes a view of coloured women as white men’s sexual property. In this context, the reference in the title to McAndrick as a “miserly Scot,” aside from being highly satirical, takes on a dual meaning, relating both to his carefulness with money, and his possession of Imelda. In addition, his miserly nature affects his general attitude towards women, seen in his reflection that no woman is worth buying clothes for, since “[a]fter all, what they had to give him was best done naked” (Jenkins 1973: 47). Thus McAndrick decides early in his relationship with Imelda that she is “merely a kind of amah, whose duties were not to wash his clothes or cook his food, but to pleasure him in bed and raise his status among his friends” (Jenkins 1973: 35). The language used to describe McAndrick’s relationship with Imelda is, to say the least, loaded with mercenary and sexually exploitative meaning; it also carries further implication that his meanness has great bearing on and is directly related to his treatment of and disposition towards her. The examples are abundant: his failure to perform sexually on the night he seduces Imelda results in him not being “able to make full use of her”, her acquiescence in bed makes him “feel quite god-like”, on finding a scar under her left breast he feels cheated since “the bargain wasn’t perfect after all”, other expatriates’ admiration for her exceptional beauty and their congratulations to him amount to “a hundred per cent profit”, and when trying to get rid of her at the end of the story he feels “as desolate as if he’d lost all his savings” (Jenkins 1973: 33, 37, 38, 41, 64). Through McAndrick’s perspective, Imelda is explicitly accorded the status of an object and possession beneficial to McAndrick on a social, psychological, and physical level. In related terms, the colony was beneficial to the Empire both politically and economically.

With this in mind, we can fairly conclude that McDonald’s rela-

tionship with Jenny, and McAndrick's relationship with Imelda can be read as symbols for the relationship of Empire and (former) colony, or West and East. These inter-racial relationships are based first and foremost on the man's superiority, the woman's inferiority, and the man's possession of and dominance over the woman. Therefore, Jenny and Imelda represent two things: the female as oppressed by the male, and the native as subjected to the power of Empire. There are several theories to support this view. In his widely known book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Frantz Fanon argues that sexual liberty is the privilege of the white man, particularly within the setting of Empire, while a relationship between a coloured man and a white woman carries an entirely different meaning: "Since he is the master and more simply the male, the white man can allow himself the luxury of sleeping with many women. This is true in every country and especially in colonies. But when a white woman accepts a black man there is automatically a romantic aspect. It is a giving, not a seizing" (Fanon 1967: 46). Fanon's words clearly suggest that sexual relations between a white man and a coloured woman emphasise imperial assumption of ownership of colonies and their resources, including, of course, the native women. This line of argument is developed further by Michael Gorra; he sees the relationship between a white man and a coloured woman as having "an element of coercion [...] a demonstration of mastery that replicates in miniature" the relationship between Empire and colony, while also maintaining that an affair between a white woman and a coloured man "is a sexual union that challenges rather than confirms the power of the empire itself" (Gorra 1997: 48). Fanon and Gorra's arguments thus clearly support a reading of the inter-racial relationships in Jenkins's two stories as being symbolic for relations between Empire and colony as well as emphasizing the disparity of power in male-female relations under the patriarchal construct.

Yet the narratives' tragic conclusions are different in nature and offer differing interpretations of Jenkins's treatment of the issues of patriarchy, colonialism, and the inter-racial affair. Without resisting in any way, Jenny willingly gives her daughter to McDonald to take

her back to Scotland with him and then commits suicide on the day of McDonald's departure by taking an overdose of sleeping pills. Conversely, Imelda (who is very different from Jenny and is also shown to expect certain material gains from her relationship with McAndrick) first responds to McAndrick's reluctance to allow her any sort of individuality and influence in their relationship by becoming increasingly violent towards him, until McAndrick, frightened by her behaviour, decides to get rid of her; Imelda's reaction is to savagely murder McAndrick with a primitive blowpipe off his living-room wall. This extreme divergence between Jenny and Imelda's response to their lovers' self-assumed superiority is first and foremost caused by their different personalities and social status; Jenny is a servant whose innocence, subservient nature, and love for McDonald make her sacrifice her child and herself for McDonald's benefit, whereas Imelda is a kept mistress whose gentle and passive façade hides a resolution and intelligence which, mixed with her violent streak, make her determined to assert her independence against McAndrick's male and colonialist domination.

What do these two diverse endings signify in feminist and post-colonial terms? To begin with, Jenny's complete submission to McDonald as her lord and lover obviously reaffirms the patriarchal construct rather than challenges it, and this fact makes *The Expatriates* emerge as a novel which ultimately upholds patriarchal conceptions of set gender roles. This element of the novel is clearly suggested through the perspective of Jenny's employer, Florence Bennett, who knows that Jenny's nature and actions work against the feminist cause, and who views Jenny as "the worst traitress ever to [her] own sex" (Jenkins 1971: 141). On another level, Jenny's unquestioning subservience to McDonald, her surrender of her daughter Nancy to the embrace of Western mentality and culture, and her ultimate self-sacrifice by suicide, can all symbolise a colony's passivity towards an imperial power, thereby confirming Occidental views of the Orient as subordinate by nature and in need of Western control. Jenny's final act demonstrates her subservience to McDonald in the most extreme way: she sacrifices her own life

for his interests.<sup>10</sup> Her death is simultaneously a symbolic reminder of the destructive effects of imperialism on native people and their culture.

On the other hand, Imelda's gruesome revolt against McAndrick demonstrates her refusal to obey and be enslaved to male authority; accordingly, Imelda's murder of her lover can represent radical feminist deconstruction of patriarchal ideologies. In postcolonial terms, Imelda's resistance epitomises the colony's refusal to be subjected to Western domination, suggesting that such refusal, if not taken seriously by the imperial power, can become brutal and bloody rebellion. Jenkins's portrayal of Imelda's rebellion against McAndrick is further interesting in his description of her in her two attacks on McAndrick. In these scenes Imelda has become like her forefathers, the head-hunters:

Instantly she heaved it [the parang] up. [...] Her eyes were bloodshot. Her lips had gone thick. Her feet were paws. [...]

In the doorway, [...] with her hair hanging about her face [...] stood Imelda, or rather crouched, with her bare feet wide apart. In her hands, held like a spear, was the blowpipe, that genuine relic of Kalimantan headhunting days.

It was aimed at him [McAndrick]. Before he could yell or put up his hands as a shield, she charged at him, with a strange bounding action no doubt inherited from ancestors used to hopping over logs and roots. (Jenkins, 1973: 58, 64)

It is as if Imelda has reverted back to her roots; her behaviour during these scenes is, by implication, specific to her culture and history. Jenkins clearly attributes this interpretation of Imelda to McAndrick, whose perspective on her "primitive" appearance and movements accords closely with traditional racist and imperialist

---

10 McDonald's reaction to Jenny's death—as seen through his wife's perspective—arguably underlines his moral cowardice as well as demonstrates his discomfort over having treated Jenny the way he did; although stricken by some kind of grief for the mother of his child, he nevertheless seems in some strange way relieved that she is dead. Moreover, his wife reflects that while sobbing he is also "in a way enjoying his grief" (Jenkins 1971: 253). Since Jenny is dead, he does not have to agonise over having left her in Kalimantan grieving for her lost child. Perhaps Jenny's removal also means that it will be easier for him to assimilate Nancy into a "white," Western cultural mentality.

ideas. At the same time, it is also possible to interpret this skewed portrayal as that of an independent and proud native woman, who fights against McAndrick's dominance and brutally defeats him by using indigenous weapons representative of her culture and background. This Imelda is certainly not the gentle, docile, and accepting primitive that her lover had initially seen in her. Despite being presented through McAndrick's biased perspective, Imelda's final actions contradict McAndrick's notions about her nature, and invert traditional, pre-conceived Western ideas of the native stereotype (as being irrational, childlike, and subordinate by nature). The story's conclusion then further subverts imperial ideas of natives' inherent inferiority and need for domination, as we are shown McAndrick noticing "with his last flicker of intelligence" that his native servant's horror at the murderous scene nevertheless has "savage triumph in it" (Jenkins 1973: 64). The servant's terror at seeing McAndrick murdered by Imelda is mixed with desire to rise against the white, colonial power that he represents, and in this sense, therefore, she supports Imelda's rebellion against McAndrick and Empire. Regardless of the brutality by which this is achieved, Imelda's murder of McAndrick ultimately works towards Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's model of reinstating the marginalised in the face of the dominant (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 175), in both feminist and postcolonial terms. While both *The Expatriates* and "Imelda and the Miserly Scot" thus offer powerful exposure of the unequal sexual dynamics within patriarchal, racial and imperial power structures, the short story arguably conveys a more decisive message on Jenkins's sympathies with colonised peoples.

### 3. Conclusion: feminist postcolonialism?

The novels and stories by Robin Jenkins that are set outside his native country convey a clear critique of the imperial enterprise. *The Expatriates* and "Imelda and the Miserly Scot" are outstanding examples of such work. These stories demonstrate in no uncertain terms the expatriates' Eurocentric arrogance, while also shedding light on the sexual exploitation that often took place within the

confines of the Empire. The relationships of McDonald and McAndrick with Jenny and Imelda are characterised by the type of power dynamics that are clearly present within both the patriarchal and the imperial structure. Accordingly, these inter-racial affairs epitomise the very imbalance of power that is so frequently criticised by feminists and postcolonial peoples. Ultimately, *The Expatriates* appears to emphasise the patriarchal and imperial power imbalance in the way its inter-racial relationship is resolved, although this does by no means indicate Jenkins's own support for the masculine, racial and colonial hegemony that is revealed in the novel. Rather, through his portrayal of the power imbalance presented in *The Expatriates*, Jenkins exposes the unseen price many women and natives have had to pay within imperial and/or patriarchal systems. The conclusion of "Imelda and the Miserly Scot," on the other hand, represents a radical deconstruction of and opposition to both the patriarchal and the imperial power. The short story therefore has strong feminist and postcolonial bias despite its clear imperial and male narrative focus. As a result, I would suggest that if there is anywhere a place for the term "feminist postcolonialism," it would most certainly be in a discussion of "Imelda and the Miserly Scot."

## ÚTDRÁTTUR

Um heimsvaldakúgun og þeldökkar ástkonur  
 í sögunum *The Expatriates* og  
 „Imelda and the Miserly Scot“ eftir Robin Jenkins

Þessi grein fjallar um það gagnrýna viðhorf til breska heimsveldisins sem birtist í skáldsögum og smásögum skoska rithöfundarins Robins Jenkins. Einkum er sjónum beint að tveimur verkum Jenkins, skáldsögunni *The Expatriates* og smásögunni „Imelda and the Miserly Scot“ sem báðar gerast utan Skotlands. Lýsing Jenkins á ástarsamböndum hvíttra manna og litaðra kvenna í verkunum tveimur er greind frá sjónarhorni síðnýlendustefnu og femínisma. Þessi sambönd eru tákmynd fyrir samskipti heimsveldis og nýlendu og bera þar að auki keim af misnotkun á grunni kynþáttar, efnahags og kynferðis. Einnig endurspeglar þróun þeirra uppbyggingu og valdahlutföll feðraveldisins. Þrátt fyrir þetta bjóða sögurnar upp á ólíkar lausnir á þeim átökum sem eiga sér stað á milli nýlenduherrans og þess innfædda og á milli karls og konu. Mismunandi kenningar um tengsl femínisma og síðnýlenduhyggju eru kynntar og áhrifamiklar kenningar Edwards Saids eru settar í samhengi við hugmyndir femínismans. Kenningin um „tvöfalda nýlendukúgun“ (e. *double colonisation*) á sérstaklega við þá mynd sem Jenkins dregur upp af ástarsamböndunum tveimur. Að lokum er sýnt fram á hvernig atburðarás og persónusköpun Jenkins í *The Expatriates* staðfestir að því er virðist valdauppbyggingu heimsveldis og feðraveldis á meðan sömu þættir í „Imelda and the Miserly Scot“ endurspeglar hins vegar skýra áskorun gegn báðum.

*Lykilord:* Robin Jenkins, síðnýlendustefna, femínismi, blönduð ástarsambönd, tvöföld nýlendukúgun

## ABSTRACT

**Surrender and Sacrifice:  
Imperial Subjugation and the Coloured Mistress  
in Robin Jenkins's *The Expatriates* and  
"Imelda and the Miserly Scot"**

This article discusses Robin Jenkins's critical treatment of the imperial theme in his novels and short stories set outside of Scotland, and then goes on to analyse his portrayal of inter-racial relationships in *The Expatriates* and "Imelda and the Miserly Scot" from a postcolonial and feminist angle. The two stories are both set in Kalimantan and focus on the relationships of two Scotsmen with coloured women; these relationships clearly symbolise relations between Empire and colony, and carry heavy overtones of racial, economic and sexual exploitation. Simultaneously, these sexual liaisons also showcase in their development a fixed patriarchal structure despite offering different resolutions to the conflict of power between colonialist and native/man and woman. Different critical perspectives on the relationship between feminism and postcolonialism are discussed, and the seminal theorising of Edward Said placed within the context of feminist ideas. The idea of "double colonisation" (Ashcroft et al. 1995: 250) is particularly relevant to the ways in which Jenkins presents the two inter-racial affairs. Ultimately, *The Expatriates* is seen to reaffirm both the imperial and the patriarchal construct, while "Imelda and the Miserly Scot" is shown to present a clear challenge to both imperial and patriarchal authority.

*Keywords:* Robin Jenkins, postcolonialism, feminism, inter-racial affair, double colonisation

## WORKS CITED

- Ashcroft, Bill, Griffins, Gareth, and Tiffin, Helen. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Griffins, Gareth, and Tiffin, Helen, eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. 1995. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ágústsdóttir, Ingibjörg. 1999. "A Truthful Scot." Interview with Robin Jenkins. *In Scotland* 1, pp. 13–22. Print.
- Ágústsdóttir, Ingibjörg. 2001. "Pilgrims of Conscience: Quests for Morality and Self-Knowledge in the Fiction of Robin Jenkins." Ph.D. Thesis. University of Glasgow.
- Ágústsdóttir, Ingibjörg. 2006. "Ethics of War in the Fiction of Robin Jenkins." *Ethically Speaking: Voice and Values in Modern Scottish Writing* (pp. 87–98). Eds. James McGonigal and Kirsten Stirling. New York: Rodopi.
- Baker, Timothy C. 2010. "Scottish Utopian Fiction and the Invocation of God." *Utopian Studies* 21(1), pp. 91–117.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld.
- Finlay, Richard J. 1998. "National Identity: From British Empire to European Union." *Modern Scottish History 1707 to the Present* (pp. 25–46). Vol. 2. Eds. Anthony Cooke et al. Phantassie: Tuckwell.
- Gorra, Michael. 1997. *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hechter, Michael. 1975. *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Jenkins, Robin. 1955. "Novelist in Scotland." *Saltire Review* 5, pp. 7–10.
- Jenkins, Robin. 1969. *The Holy Tree*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Jenkins, Robin. 1971. *The Expatriates*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Jenkins, Robin. 1973. "Imelda and the Miserly Scot." *A Far Cry From Bowmore & Other Stories* (pp. 26–64). London: Victor Gollancz.
- Jenkins, Robin. 1973. *A Far Cry From Bowmore & Other Stories*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Jenkins, Robin. 1982. "Why I Decided Scotland Must Be Seen through Fresh and Truthful Eyes." *Glasgow Herald* 12 October, p. 11.
- Jenkins, Robin. 1996. Foreword. *Lunderston Tales*, (pp. ix–x) Edinburgh: Polygon.
- Jenkins, Robin. 2000. Letter to Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir. 14 Dec. MS. N.p.
- Kanneh, Kadiatu. 1995. "Feminism and the Colonial Body." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (pp. 346–348). Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffins and Helen Tiffin. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lloyd, T. O. 1996. *The British Empire 1558–1995*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Loomba, Ania. 1998. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge.

- Mack, Douglas S. 2006. *Scottish Fiction and the British Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Miller, Gavin. 2008. "Sympathy as Cognitive Impairment in Robin Jenkins's *The Cone-Gatherers*: The Limits of Homo Sacer." *Journal of Literary Disability* 2(1), pp. 22–31.
- Norquay, Glenda. 1985. "Moral Absolutism in the Novels of Robert Louis Stevenson, Robin Jenkins and Muriel Spark." Ph.D. Thesis. University of Edinburgh.
- Norquay, Glenda. 1986. "Against Compromise: The Fiction of Robin Jenkins." *Cencrastus* 24, pp. 3–6.
- Norquay, Glenda. 1987. "Four Novelists of the 1950s and 1960s." *The History of Scottish Literature* (pp. 259–275). Vol. 4. Ed. Cairns Craig. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.
- "Sabah." *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition*. Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/514907/Sabah> [accessed 21 September 2013].
- Said, Edward W. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Said, Edward W. 1995. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin.
- Schoene, Berthold. 1995. "A Passage to Scotland: Scottish Literature and the British Postcolonial Condition." *Scotlands* 2(1), pp. 107–122.
- Sellin, Bernard. 2010. "Exile and Expatriates in Robin Jenkins' Novels." *Études Écossaises* 13, pp. 129–138. <http://etudeseccossaises.revues.org/index231.html#text> [accessed 8 June 2012].
- Suleri, Sara. 1995. "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (pp. 273–280). Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London and New York: Routledge..
- Thompson, Alistair R. 1963. "Faith and Love: An Examination of Some Themes in the Novels of Robin Jenkins." *New Saltire* 3, pp. 57–64.