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Cultural and Political Background

*"*Mrs Packletide's Tiger*"*, published in *The Chronicles of Clovis* in 1911, centres on the materialistic motives of man regarding big-game hunting, which had become a fashion towards the end of the century. Harriet Ritvo, discussing the connection between triumphing over a dangerous animal and subduing unwilling natives, believes that big game hunting was 'the most atavistic and antagonistic connection between humans and animals, [and] became the fitting emblem of the new style in which the English dominated both the human and the natural world.' [1]Big game hunting represented personal, cultural and political dominion. She also writes: 'wild animals competed directly with humans for a finite amount of land, tracts set aside for game reserves could not be used for farming […] In the first decade of the twentieth century the Indian government still offered rewards for killing tigers.'[2]The slain animal represented a personal assertion of dominance.[3]

But Mrs Packletide's motive is not 'that she felt, she would leave India safer and more wholesome than she had found it, with one fraction less of wild beast per million of inhabitants' (115), nor is it to show her bravery. Her compelling motive is to rival Loona Bimberton who has already procured a tiger-skin and has returned with many photographs to confirm her trophy. The name 'Loona' indicates the foolishness of the character, with echoes of 'loony' or 'lunatic'. Saki often gives his characters ridiculous names and deliberately does not characterize them in depth which has the object of dehumanizing them. Mrs Packletide wants to arrange a lunch at her house, 'ostensibly in Loona Bimberton's honour, with a tiger-skin rug occupying most of the foreground and all of the conversation'

(115), and also intends to give a tiger-claw brooch to Loona on her next birthday – thus confirming her essentially selfish and triumphalist motives.

Saki regards the human exploitation of big-game animals as a brutal act of violence. Loona and Mrs Packletide, the trophy-hunters, are examples of human folly and greed in an age when destroying wild animals was justified as an emblem of progress. Human exploitation of bigger animals resulted in the gradual disappearance of some species. In the story recounted in "Mrs Packletide's Tiger" the only tiger in the region is an old one, so old that the natives are worried it may die before being hunted. It is so harmless that it could not even 'spring up […] even if it wanted to' (116). According to Ritvo, in the early nineteenth century 'dense accumulations of animals […] dazzled early adventurers', but towards the end of the century there were 'more hunters and fewer animals'.[4] Saki reveals the amoral motives for killing and butchering animals: 'In a world that is supposed to be chiefly swayed by hunger and by love Mrs Packletide was an exception; her movements were largely governed by dislike of Loona Bimberton' (115).

Mrs Packletide offers a thousand rupees for the opportunity of shooting a tiger 'without overmuch risk or exertion' (116). The hunters asserted the physical and moral superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans by claiming that they relieved the natives of the threat of wild animals. They reported that 'the natives, hearing of our arrival, wait upon us, imploring us to rid them of the lions that are preying upon them.'[5] When natives were threatened by wild animals, big game hunting became both a business and a pleasure. But in Saki's story the natives are willing to help Mrs Packletidenot because they are scared by the tiger – old as it is – in fact 'the prospect of earning a thousand rupees had stimulated the sporting and commercial instinct of the villagers' (116). Thus Saki shows the barbarity of civilized people hidden behind their claims for benevolence. As Frost observes: 'Returning from a year in Burma, he [Saki] had been made aware of the absurdity of white men in a tropical setting'.[6] The natives do not have any fear of the tiger, and even employ their children to guard night and day, on the outskirts of the

local jungle to head the tiger back, and prevent it from roaming away to fresh hunting grounds. 'Mothers carrying their babies home through the jungle […] hushed their singing lest they might curtail the restful sleep of the venerable herd-robber' (116). Thus Saki shows the gap between reality and appearance, proving that the European hunters were not such benefactors as they pretended to be. Saki exposes the falsehood and deception that constitute the civilizing process. The development of modern urban society was due to the cruel abuse of animals and the historical task of Europeans was not to bring civilization to those living in savagery. Saki's picture of India may seem alien to contemporary English reader because it represents India as a real place where people live ordinary lives far from having adventures with tigers and far from the norms of Imperial power. Big-game hunting was indeed a justification for hiding the materialistic motives of the Empire-builders and their egoism in violating wildlife, while they were themselves more dangerous than wild animals with their greed and their butchery.

Mrs Packletide, like other hunters of the period, wants to get her picture in the paper, to have a trophy for her drawing room, and to make a rival envious by regaining social supremacy over her. The hunters derived satisfaction from killing big game and bringing trophies of hunted animals such as hide, horns and the physical remains of the hunted animal that enhanced their social status. 'When good sport was the main desideratum, sportsmen strove to stage confrontations in which the animal would be inspired to struggle rather than to give up; a hierarchy of sporting techniques paralleled that of game animals.'[7]

But Mrs Packletide does not want to risk her life; she wants to hunt the animal 'without overmuch risk' (116). According to Ritvo, the native's 'unsporting way to avoid the risk and trouble of entering the animal's environment was to offer it live bait such as goats'[8] in the same way as is depicted in the story. While sitting in the dark and waiting for the tiger to turn up, Miss Mebbin, the paid companion of Mrs Packletide, is not actually nervous about the wild beast; instead she 'had a morbid dread of performing an atom more service than she had been paid for'

(116). Therefore inSaki's story the beast is not a noble antagonist, nor is the hunter's motive the most exciting and glorious sport.

Finally the old beast dies of heart failure caused by the noise of the rifle going off. Mrs Packletide understands that she has shot the goat instead and cannot therefore boast of her vanquished foe. As Carey says, tiger is 'too grand a name for the unfortunate old beast that dies of heart failure when Mrs Packletide lets fly at it with her rifle.'[9] Animals were compared and valued according to the degree of danger they posed to the hunter whereas inSaki's story the tiger is less harmful than its hunters. Saki probes the evils of the society and reveals the vicious life led by some supposedly 'respectable' people. Many characters in Saki's stories are vulnerable to blackmail because they have an embarrassing secret to hide.[10] Mrs Packletide wants to conceal the embarrassing secret that she has shot the goat instead of the tiger. She is annoyed at Miss Mebbin because she is a witness who finally blackmails Mrs Packletide. According to Pringle 'she has paid in order to put Loona out of countenance; she has also paid Louisa to save face. MrsPackletide's tiger turned out to be Louisa Mebbin'[11] Miss Mebbin eventually buys a villa which she calls 'Les Fauves', which means 'wild beasts', to remind her employer of the hold she has over her. The same thing happens in Saki's "Treasure Ship" in which Vasco buys a villa after blackmailing some rich people.

But Mrs Packletide is the possessor of a dead tiger anyway. Her photographs appear in the pages of *Texas Weekly Snapshot* and in the illustrated Monday supplement of the *Novoe Vremya.* Mrs Packletide seems pleased with owning a dead tiger, but the success and fame is not as great as she had hoped. Saki's deliberate choice of the periodicals, apparently published in far away countries and unimportant for the British reader, belittles Mrs Packletide's much sought-after fame. Saki regards European big-game hunters as pseudo-heroes, and that, not in their own countries, but in the unknown or distant lands or empires. 'As for Loona Bimberton, she refused to look at the illustrated paper for weeks, and her letter of thanks for the gift of a tiger-claw brooch was a model of repressed emotions. The luncheon-party she declined; there are limits beyond which

repressed emotions become dangerous.'(117). When the hunters are back in their home, they are not welcomed as heroes, because the Europeans are well aware of their motives. The story aims to capture the psychology of Imperialism in miniature.

In fact, Mrs Packletide is the victim of her greed and folly, with the difference that she does not arouse the reader's sympathy as much as the shot goat or the tiger do. Like many other stories by Saki in which wild and tame are contrasted, the characters begin with pride at first and end with humiliation. Saki's aim, especially his representation of the tiger as harmless, is to show that wild life or beast in man is more a threat than wildlife outside of man. Here the tiger is contrasted with a beastly woman, with the focus not on the wild animal, but on the stupid bestiality of the human being. Saki'srepresentation of the encounter between wild and tame well persuades the reader that European woman is more dangerous than animals such as the tiger that are supposed to be cruel, rapacious and destructive. In all Saki's stories where there is an encounter between the wild and the tame, the narrative voice sympathizes with the wild, especially when the wildness is represented through animals. But here Saki deals with a woman character and because of his misogynistic motives the wildness is shifted to the woman; nonetheless, animals still earn more sympathy than human characters. Saki reveals sentimentality over the animal victim because it is shown to be truly innocent. "Mrs Packletide's Tiger" has some similarities with "Esme", the first tale of the same collection. "Esme" centres on two aristocratic ladies and their hunting story. Saki's humiliating picture of the Baroness and her friend is similar to his characterization of Mrs Packletide and Loona. At the end of the story the Baroness is given a diamond brooch but loses the friendship of Constance.

Saki's characterization of Mrs Packletide seems to be a parody of the adventures of Isabel Savory, a huntress who published a book in 1900 about her adventures, including a chapter on 'Tiger Shooting'. Savory was a sportswoman who wrote about her experiences of big-game hunting inIndia. Saki's story can be considered as an allegory of the contemporary situation. Savory writes that they hunted

twelve heads during the first six weeks, including seven tigers and one panther.[12] She published photographs of herself and her companion hunters. In the background of one of the photographs there are many tiger skins which suggest that there is more to this than business and pleasure; it is really the wholescale butchery of animals. Similarly in Saki's story 'Loona Bimberton had recently been carried eleven miles in an aeroplane by an Algerian aviator, and talked of nothing else; only a personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of Press photographs could successfully counter that sort of thing'(115).

Savory writes: 'As it was, we might walk for miles and never see a living animal. It is only in the last forty or fifty years that the jungles of Central India have been practically denuded of game, and it is a thousand pities'[13] As in Saki's story there is only one old tiger left. Savory also reports boastfully about the way she has shot her third tiger. She warns other sportswomen who might be contemplating a tiger hunt: 'Do not set out on a tiger shoot without being prepared for a great deal of discomfort […] Unless a woman is physically strong, it would be foolhardiness to spend eight weeks under such conditions.[14]

The New Woman Movement

Saki's characterization of Loona and Mrs Packletide is a parody of the idea of the 'New Woman Movement' and the immersion of women into a man's world. The term 'New Woman' was coined by the novelist Sarah Grand[15] (1854-1943) in 1894 to describe young women of the 1890s who advocated suffrage, equal rights and equal educational opportunities for women.[16] The term was first used in an article entitled "A New Aspect of the Woman Question" published in the *North American Review* in March 1894.[17] Grand chose the term to refer to a type of well-educated, middle-class woman who was openly critical of the traditional roles established for women, especially marriage and motherhood, and who was influenced by the feminist movement to speak out in favour of equal education for women. In her essay Grand argues that women are naturally purer than men. She believes in the need of the superior moral training that women can offer men because men are foolish and brutal.

In the Victorian period, a woman was to be valued for qualities considered to be especially characteristic of her sex, such as tenderness,unworldliness, innocence, domestic affection and submissiveness, with the obligation of maternity and wifehood. In an article on "The Twentieth Century Woman" published on 23 February 1895, Mrs E. Lynn Linton argues:

> And conspicuous in this sublime evolution stands woman, freed from all her frailties and purified from all her special sins, with the strength and knowledge and breadth of man added to the charm and sweetness of her own ideal [...]She will have to get rid of her present rampant self-assertion and disregard of old-time modesties, and to consider the wisdom of her restless interference in things with which she has no business, mated with her neglect of all her hitherto assigned duties, before she can reach the standard of her moral possibilities […] She wants […] to have the freedom of a man while retaining the protection accorded to a sheltered woman, to learn life experimentally as a man, […] to be the rival not the helpmate of man […] She is to combine both masculine attributes and womanly qualities.[18]

New Women adopted a manly form of dress. They explored and hunted like men. On the first page of Savory's book there is a photo of her dressed as a hunter, and there were similar photos of New Women in the periodicals of the time. They look like men and claimed that they were physically, morally and intellectually prepared to take their stand with men. Still, not satisfied with this, they wanted to have a higher position than men, throwing aside the old-fashioned career of wife and mother. Another woman, Lady Jeune in an article published on 5 January 1901 wrote:

> It was to be all the fashion for a woman in putting on "bloomers" to take up all the pursuits of a man. She was to shoot, ride, drink, and as much as possible, shape her life on the same lines as her lord or master [...] She

> only wanted to copy him as closely as might be, her object being to prove that he was not a much "better fellow" than herself.[19]

But Saki's view of Mrs Packletide is ironically humiliating. He shows the New Woman movement as not only humorous or futile, but leading to appalling consequences as a result of *fin de siècle* society. Saki demolishes New Woman by representing a wild picture of her, contrary to the 'angel in the house' image of traditional woman and also contrary to the emancipated woman. The stereotype of the mannish 'wild woman' was already perpetuated by anti-feminists such as Mrs Lynn Linton and Mrs Humphrey Ward. In an article entitled "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents" Linton asserts:

> Free-trades in all that relates to sex, the Wild women allow men no monopoly in sports, in games, in responsibilities. Beginning by 'walking with the guns,' they end by shooting with them; and some have made the moor a good training-ground for the jungle. As life is constituted, it is necessary to have butchers and sportsmen. The hunter's instinct keeps down the wild beasts, and those who go after big game do as much good to the world as those who slaughter home-bred beasts for the market. But in neither instance do we care to see a woman's hand […] Precisely as horrible, as incongruous, is the image of a well-bred sportswoman whose bullet has crashed along the spine of a leopardess, who has knocked over a rabbit or brought down a partridge […] an absolutely unwomanly indifference to death and suffering: which certain of the Wild women of the present day cultivate as one of their protests against the limitations of sex.[20]

Through the image of the aggressive female Saki shows his apprehension and expresses his horror at the threat of female cruelty. Langguth believes thatSaki did not suggest that 'Mrs Packletide was driven to shoot because of doubts about her masculinity. She merely wanted to get her picture in the paper, to have a trophy for her drawing room, and to make an enemy envious'.[21]In Saki's view women

are too short-sighted to be what they claim, and the motive behind the so-called New Woman Movement is viewed as something else. Saki's characterization of Mrs Packletide is a direct misogynist attack on the emancipated New Woman whose natural womanhood had become distorted through a false kind of emancipation. In another part of the same article, Linton asserts: 'As a rule, these women have no scruples about money. They are notorious for never having small change; they get into debt with a facility as amazing in its want of conscience as its want of foresight; and then they take to strange ways for redeeming their credit and saving themselves from public exposure […] aggressive, disturbing, officious, unquiet, rebellious to authority and tyrannous to those whom they can subdue…' [22]. Mrs Packletide is also characterized as being extravagant. Saki portrays her vulnerability and condemns her to disappointment so that after her being blackmailed she gives up big-game shooting.

Another aspect of Saki's story is the representation of the *femme fatale*. Saki shows the terrifying aspect of feminine perverseness and the animal nature of the female character. He portrays a threatening figure of women. Around the same time that Saki wrote this story about cruel foolish woman hunter, hostile forces in the press named feminist campaigners as wild or revolting. Betterton argues that in the Edwardian period a connection was popularly made between hysteria and the suffrage movement. Freud's and Breuer's *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) was first published in English translation in 1909 (almost two years before the publication of Saki's story). Hysteria was 'linked with female disorder' and 'identified with feminism':

> Hysteria had become an explanation which could be fitted to any and every deviation from the feminine norm.

A pose similar to that in 'Ecstacy on arrest' appears in the central photograph of Mrs Pankhurst. Eyes closed, lips apart and head tipped back, her face resembles, iconographically, the type of *femme fatale* common in European painting at the end of the nineteenth-century […] In its more malevolent symbolist incarnations,

the *femme fatale* drew on ancient archetype of women as betrayer and emasculator of men. She was Medusa or Salome, whom Des Esseintes, the hero of Joris-Karl Huysmans' *Against the Grain* (1884) described as 'the goddess of immortal hysteria'.[23]

Betterton argues that the *femme fatale* was a symbol of female sexual disorder. The growing demand by women for political, cultural and educational rights caused fear of female disorder, insanity and sexual power over men. The aggressiveness of the suffragettes reached extremes of violence in 1909. More than hundred women were arrested when the suffragettes lay siege to the House of Commons. Shaw supported the suffrage movement by signing a petition which was published in the *Times* on 23 March 1909. Beckson also links hysteria with New Woman:

> In the late 19th century female aggressiveness, often associated with unrestrained sexuality, manifested itself in the anxiety-provoking image of the femme fatale and the female vampire in the imagination of men, unconsciously yearning, perhaps, for encounter with such alluring evil. At the same time, these myths – in part, a reaction to the 'angle in the house' image of women – suggest fear that the male will be 'marginalized' by 'an explosively mobile, magic woman, who breaks the boundaries of family within which her society restricts her.[24]

Saki shows the bestiality of Mrs Packletide's sporting activities. She is far from the 'angel in the house' and self-sacrificing image of woman, even far from the self-sacrificing New Women who went on hunger strikes to gain their rights. The pursuit of fun is the most important element in Mrs Packletide'slife. According to Cynthia Russett:

> The Lombrosian School quite consistently extended recapitulatory parallels of criminality to women. Against the backdrop of the Victorian canonization of true womanhood […] women harboured 'evil tendencies more numerous and more varied then men's' though usually latent. Inside

> the normal woman lurked 'the innocuous semi-criminal' […] She often added to these unlovely traits, 'the worst qualities of woman: namely, an excessive desire for revenge, cunning, cruelty, love of dress, and untruthfulness, forming a combination of evil tendencies which often results in a type of extraordinary wickedness.[25]

There are interesting parallels between Saki and Nietzsche in their characterization of women. Saki's idea, especially the 'tiger-claw brooch' is very similar to Nietzsche's image of women's 'tiger-claws beneath the glove'. It does not seem to be a mere coincidence that Nietzsche asserts the 'emancipation of woman' is in fact 'defeminizing' her:

> That in woman which inspires respect and fundamentally fear is her *nature*, which is more 'natural' than that of the man, her genuine, cunning, beast-of-prey suppleness, the tiger's claws beneath the glove, the naivety of her egoism, her ineducability and inner savagery, and how incomprehensible, capacious and prowling her desires and virtues are…that which, all fear notwithstanding, evokes pity for this dangerous and beautiful cat 'woman' is that she appears to be more afflicted, more vulnerable, more in need of love, and more condemned to disappointment than any other animal. Fear and pity: it is with these feelings that man has hitherto stood before woman.[26]

Nietzsche also described '[die] Frauengleichberechtigung' [equal rights for women] as one of the 'Symptome des absinkenden Lebens' [symptoms of life in decline].[27]

Literary Background

Beaty, in his analysis of Saki's story, claims that the story is 'in part derived from Alphonse Daudet's *Tartarin de Tarascon* (1869)'. According to Beaty:

> Daudet's quixotic hero, Tartarin, goes to Algeria to save his honour by killing lions. In his first abortive attempt by moonlight, he bleats like a

> goat and shoots at what he believes to be a lion; he kills only a donkey. The second time he shoots a blind, tame lion and has to pay dearly for it. Nevertheless, he sends the lion skin to the only man in Tarascon who rivals him for bravery. Thus Tartarin returns home an acclaimed hero with his faithful camel, which, he maintains, can testify to his lion-killing exploits. [28]

What Beaty writes seems reasonable enough, except that Mrs Packletide cannot be compared to a quixotic hero. She is well aware of her real motive for hunting a tiger. Besides, Beaty parallels the camel with Mrs Packletide's paid companion, Miss Louisa Mebbin, saying that 'Louisa, unlikeTartarin's camel, not only can talk, but threatens to do so'[29]and this signals a major difference, because blackmail is an important theme of Saki'sstory. Another lies in the fact that almost all the characters in Saki's story are women: Mrs Packletide, her paid companion Miss Mebbin, her rival LoonaBimberton, and even the natives who help Mrs Packletide are all women. Saki's stimulus for writing this story that is as misogynistic as his other stories is the rejection of the New Woman movement, which is a dimension obviously absent from Daudet.

The narrative makes use of biblical allusion. Mrs Packletide is compared to Nimrod, the founder of the city of Babylon. 'And Gush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord' (Genesis 10: 8-9) Nimrod captured seven cities and established the world's first, post-deluge empire. He subdued all the people of the earth. It has also been suggested that Nimrod tamed a leopard to accompany him on his hunt for animals. Nimrod was not only the hunter of animals, but also the hunter of men. Mrs Packletide's 'sudden deviation towards the footsteps of Nimrod' (115) indicates Saki's parody of the 'mighty hunter' idea, as well as paralleling the big-game hunting with the exploitation of the empire, as Nimrod was famous for both.[30]

There is also a mythological allusion in the story: 'Mrs Packletide went to the County Costume Ball in the character of Diana' (117). Diana is the Roman

Goddess of wild woodland,[31] a huntress who appears in Roman art with bow and quiver. She is known as the protector of women and small children. She is also known as the protector of wild animals or lady of beasts. Ironically, Mrs Packletide as a huntress and 'a modern Diana' is regarded as lacking feminine values, not being independent and compassionate as Diana is defined, and is vulnerable herself because she is blackmailed. These are native women and children who help her hunt the tiger. The name of Loona can also be seen as a variation of 'Luna', also referring to Diana, goddess of the moon. She is also considered by Romans to be the same as Isis, goddess of civilization. Diana is known as the protector of lower classes, especially slaves, but Saki's Diana comes from the land of colonizers. Conversely the modern Diana in the form of a European hunter is shown to be responsible for the unjust treatment towards natives and the wildlife. Diana is also a fertility deity associated with erotic dance ritual in ancient fertility rites. Mrs Packletide's appearance in the ball in the costume of Diana can be a parody of fertility rites. The suggestion of Clovis about wearing animal skins refers to the same rites in which hunters wore the skin of animals they had hunted.

Another point of similarity between Mrs Packletide and Diana is that one day Diana aimed a distant object to prove her ability in archery to her brother Apollo, but she discovered that, unintentionally, she had killed her lover instead. Diana hits the target while Mrs Packletide fails to do so but both kill the wrong object. Even if Mrs Packletide could shoot the tiger, it was not a test of her bravery and virility. Her aim is reduced to avarice, a lustful act whose only object is to own the animal skin to rival Loona.

The tiger is also symbolic of darkness and emblematic of Dionysus who is the god of wine, women and wild behaviour. The tiger and the goat were two of Dionysus' symbols from the animal kingdom. Dionysus is sometimes pictured as riding a tiger. Walter F. Otto writes: 'No single Greek god even approaches Dionysus in the horror of his epithets, which bear witness to a savagery which is absolutely without mercy. In fact, one must evoke the memory of the monstrous

horror of eternal darkness to find anything at all comparable […] The terrors of destruction, which make all of life tremble, belong also as horrible desires, to the kingdom of Dionysus.'[32] In this case there is another similarity between Mrs Packletide and Dionysus: 'The he-goat was also favoured as a sacrificial victim to Dionysus'. [33] Similarly in Saki's story, a goat is used as a bait and is killed at the end, not by the tiger, but by Mrs Packletide.

The worshippers of Dionysus are usually female. Otto also writes that Dionysus has something feminine in his nature. In Aeschylus he is called contemptuously 'the womanly one'; in Euripides, 'the womanly stranger'. At times he is also called man-womanish. The Christians sneered at his effeminacy. [34] But in the inverted world of Saki, it is a woman who, lacking female compassion, imitates a man, 'woman-mannishly', as it were.

Saki's tiger is different from many contemporary literary representations of the tiger. In literature, tiger is frequently represented as a sinister killer, like the tiger in Blake's poem that burns in the darkness, or the Bengal tiger in Kipling's stories. The setting of Saki's story is India, where tigers are native, with a long-standing pre-colonial association both with sovereignty and with power. In Kipling's story, Shere Khan, though lame, is a man-eating tiger that threatens Mowgli's life. The government has specified reward of a hundred rupees for its skin. Similarly Mrs Packletide is ready to give one thousand rupees for the tiger, but Saki's tiger is different. It is not a powerful animal or a ferocious beast preying upon helpless human beings and threatening them with its fangs and claws. Through the contrast between an old, harmless tiger with an ambitious character, Saki highlights the portrait of women as cruel and selfish. It is reminiscent of King Lear's ungrateful daughters; in act IV, scene ii, the Duke of Albany condemns Regan and Goneril for their treatment of Lear, addressing them as: 'Tigers, not daughters'.

Saki's story reminds one of Frank R. Stockton's *The Lady or the Tiger* that first appeared in *The Century Magazine* in November1882. One wonders if Saki had

read Stockton's story. It would be no surprise if he had, because Stockton's story was very popular from the moment of its publication. It is the story of a semi-barbaric king who has a peculiar way of punishing the criminals by chance. The king's daughter has a lover who is beneath her in social class. The lover must enter an arena and choose one of the two doors. Behind one is a hungry tiger ready to devour the man. Behind the other is a beautiful woman who he would immediately marry. The princess who has already obtained the secret of the doors through one of the retinues of the king, faces a tough choice. Sitting in the arena she knows which door is which, and signals the lover to the door on the right, and the story ends at this anxious moment. The reader never knows what is behind the door the princess points to.

One aspect of Stockton's story is related to the New Woman movement. It was written at a time when American women were fighting for equal rights. Walter Pforzheimer believes that 'Stockton's story was projected against the background of feminine emancipation'.[35] People in Stockton's imaginary country are semi-barbaric. In 1882 the movement for the independence of women was reaching great proportions but the American girl was still semi-barbaric and her emancipation was half won. Stockton is conscious of the new movement around him. The story's end indicates women's dilemma. The question was 'What would a woman do in that predicament?' Stockton was too clever to attempt what a woman would decide. Popular demand insisted on knowing the end of the story, but Stockton finally decided to publish the story open-ended. After the publication of the story many readers wrote to Stockton and the *Century Magazine* regarding the end of the story, with the majority of the women favouring the tiger, and the majority of the men voting for the lady. Some readers believed that as a barbaric princess, she would certainly prefer to see her lover devoured by the tiger than to see him go on living happily with another woman.

A great deal of the popularity of the story was based on the title. It was widely used in advertisements, cartoons and political allegory. In 1897*Salt Lake City Herald* published its solution to the problem under the title of 'Reflections of a

Bachelor': "Probably the real fact is that the lady ate the tiger.[36] In 1899, W. S. Hopson of San Francisco wrote:

> When my wife flies into a passion
> And her anger waxes forth
> I think of the Lady and Tiger
> And sigh that I chose them both[37]

These comments were written against the background of feminine emancipation. Saki's story, like Stockton's, was written in a gentle, whimsical manner. It criticizes the women's rivalry. There is also a political point in the story in that Europeans were devouring their colonies and it makes little difference for the natives whether they were devoured by a tiger or by colonizers. 'The lady' in Saki's story is more dangerous than 'the Tiger'. Like the barbarous princess in Stockton's story, Mrs Packletide, a European 'New Woman', is worse than the primitive man. She betrays the savagery hidden by her civilized appearance.

Pforzheimer also refers to the discussion between Rudyard Kipling and Stockton about the end of the story, saying that India was interested inStockton's tale. Even towards the end of 1901, one year before Stockton's death, he was still confronted with the popular demand, regarding the end of the story, but he answered that it was impossible for him to consider the sketch from some other point of view. Soon after its publication in America,Stockton's story was published in Edinburgh in 1884 by D. Douglas. His story was discussed in social gatherings in London. Pforzheimer quotes Robert Browning's letter to a prominent English actress in which he believes that under such circumstances, the princess would direct her lover to the tiger's door.[38]

Saki's reference to the tiger-skin rug is mostly reminiscent of Elinor Glyn (1864-1943) and her novel *Three Weeks* (1907). It is the story of an adulterous love-affair between a foreign noblewoman and an English gentleman called Paul who presents the lady a tiger skin as a gift. They make love on the tiger skin and amid masses of exotic flowers which creates an atmosphere of exotic sensuality.

Because of the sexy scene on the tiger rug, the tiger rug became identified with Elinor Glyn. Various episodes in the novel were autobiographical. Everyone in Elinor's circle of friends knew that Elinorherself had a tiger skin. Hardwick believes that there also seems to be a mirror here of a scene from her own life.[39] Theses anonymous rhymes were associated with Elinor after the publication of her story:

> Would you like to sin
> With Elinor Glyn
> On a tiger skin
> Or would you prefer
> To err with her
> On some other fur?[40]

The novel that can be regarded as a 'New Woman' novel was considered scandalous but sold well, was quickly translated into other languages and made Elinor famous. She owed her fame in Europe and United States to this novel. She received gifts of tiger skin from several admirers, including LordCurzon who had been Viceroy of India from 1899 till 1905. Lord Curzon sent Elinor the skin of a tiger and told her that he had himself shot the animal whose skin he had sent her. Saki chooses the name of 'Curzon Street' for where Mrs Packletide lives, perhaps not coincidentally. The scene of the 'County Costume Ball' in which Mrs Packletide appears as Diana persuades the reader that Saki knew Elinor and her story. Lord Curzon was an important figure in Elinor's life and they first met in a ball in the house of Elinor's friend Consuelo, Duchess of Manchester. Saki associates the killing of animals with the sexual conquest of women through his symbolic name of 'Loona Bimberton' since bimbo means 'an attractive but unintelligent young woman (especially one who has an affair with a public figure), a sexy female Airhead, a loose woman'.[41] This meaning is exactly the opposite of Diana who was known as the 'lunar virgin'. One of the characters who inspired Elinor Glyn in her youth was the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt. Sakihas some references to Sarah Bernhardt in his novel *Mrs Elmsley* (1911). One

of the interesting facts in Bernhardt's life was that she was fond of wild animals and kept a baby tiger as a pet.

Many important ideas and themes emerge from "Mrs Packletide's Tiger". Through his especial portrait of a supposedly wild animal Saki reveals the savagery and ignorance of the seemingly respectable people, showing the cruelty, not of the wild animal, but of the so-called civilized people who kill them. By choosing the India as the setting of the story Saki reveals the inner life of the Empire-builders who are in fact invaders and destroyers of wild animals' domain. On the other hand through the woman characters Saki satirizes the emancipated New Woman in his highly allusive story which refers to social and political events of his time, and makes use of the famous literary works.

Endnotes

[1] Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 288.

[2] Ibid., p.287.

[3] Saki takes up this matter in *Reginald's Christmas Revel* (1903). Speaking about a boastful hunter, he writes: '…and then the major gave us a graphic account of a struggle he had with a wounded bear. I privately wished that the bears would win sometimes on these occasions; at least they wouldn't go vapouring about it afterwards.' (p.34) All page references in the parentheses are from *The Complete Saki* (London: Penguin, 1982).

[4] Hariet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, p. 276.

[5] Fredrick Glyn, *Five Months' Sport in Somali Land* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1894) p. 59. In Africa, big game was the lion and in Asia, the tiger.

[6] Adam Frost, *Saki, His Context and Development*, PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2000, p. 43.

[7] Harriet Ritvo., *The Animal Estate*, p. 268.

[8] Ibid., p. 268.

[9] John Carey, Introduction, *Saki's short stories and the Unbearable Bassington* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. vii.

[10] The theme of blackmail is also seen in "The Treasure Ship" in which the salvager discovers some papers including a list of prominent people who would be involved in a disagreeable scandal if the papers were made public, and he blackmails the rich people to live in ease. There are examples of children blackmailing adults in "The Lumber Room", "The Boar-Pig" and "Penance". The theme of blackmail is also seen in "Tobermory".

[11] P. M. Pringle, *Wolves By Jamrach: The Elusive Undercurrents in Saki's Short Stories,* M. Lit. Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1993, p. 153.

[12] Isabel Savory, *A Sportswoman in India: Personal Adventures and Experiences of Travel in Known and Unknown India* (London: Hutchinson, 1900), p. 278.

[13] Ibid., p. 279.

[14] Ibid., p. 283.

[15] Sara Grand is the pseudonym for Mrs Frances McFall.

[16] For more information see the chapter on New Woman in Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), pp. 129-159.

[17] This article is reprinted in: Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, eds., *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History 1880-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 88-90.

[18] Quoted in *Eve's Century*, ed. Anne Varty (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 21.

[19] Ibid., p. 93.

[20] Mrs E. Lynn Linton, "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents", *Nineteenth Century*, October 1891, pp. 597-8. She has a series of articles on the Wild Women in*Nineteenth Century*, see "The Wild Women as Politicians" published in July 1891, 79-88 and "The Partisans of the Wild Women", March 1892, 454-64. See also MonaCaird's responses to Mrs Linton: "A Defence of the So-called Wild Women", *Nineteenth Century*, May 1892, 811-29.

[21] A. J. Langguth, *Saki: A Life of Hector Hugh Munro* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), p. 176.

[22] Mrs E. Lynn Linton, "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents", *Nineteenth Century*, October 1891, p. 601.

[23] Rosemary Betterton, *Intimate Distance, Women, Artists and the Body* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 67-68.

[24] Karl Beckson, *London in 1890s*, p. 151. Beckson refers to Shaw's petition on page 157.

[25] Cynthia Russett, *Sexual Science*, p. 73.

[26] Fredriech Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London, Penguin, 2003), p. 169.

[27] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Douglas Smith (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 129.

[28] Beaty, Frederic L. "Mrs Packletide and Tartarin", *Nineteenth Century Fiction* (Berkeley, California University Press) Dec. 1952, VII, pp. 219-20.

[29] Ibid., p. 220.

[30] D. H. Lawrence uses the same allusion in an essay entitled "Man is a Hunter". He satirizes contemptuously the "Nimrod's of Italy": "Man is a hunter! L'uomo e cacciatore: The Italians are rather fond of saying it. It sounds so virile. One sees Nimrod surging through the underbrush, with his spear, in the wake of a bleeding

lion[….] Man, being a hunter, is, fortunately for the rest of creation, a very bad shot […] Nimrod, having hit for once, has failed to find his quarry' Lawrence may have written this essay in 1926 or 1927, but it's not known for certain. See D. H. Lawrence, *Phoenix* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 32-4.

[31] The Greek version of Diana is Artemis, Goddess of transition who administered arrows of death. See *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature,* ed. M. C.Howatson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 64, 187. See also "Diana" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

[32] Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus, Myth and Cult,* trans. Robert B. Palmer (Dallas, Tex: Spring Publications, 1986), p. 113.

[33] Ibid., p. 168.

[34] Ibid., the chapter on ' Dionysus and the Women', pp. 171-180.

[35] Walter L. Pforzheimer, *Stocktoniana, an Essay* (New York: Private Publication, 1936), p. 19. All the information in this paragraph is form the essay.

[36] Ibid., p. 28.

[37] Ibid., p.28.

[38] Ibid., p. 30.

[39] Joan Hardwick, *Addicted to Romance, The Life and Adventures of Elinor Glyn* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1994), pp. 104-5.

[40] Ibid., p. 122.

[41] *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 33.

First Response

A lucid and interesting essay whose strengths lie in its readable pace, covering one striking story by Saki, its provision of social context, and its attention to the now little known but then famous short story, “The Lady or the Tiger.”