
Trix
The Other Kipling
Barbara Fisher

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7. A Pinchbeck Goddess

Moving about as the seasons changed from Calcutta to Mussoorie and to jungle camps, Trix dutifully looked after her house and her husband, but she also made time for herself to write. Unable to work with interruptions, she rose early before the rest of the household awoke and took her pen and paper out in the cool morning air. Resisting what she thought of as her own slothful nature, she produced story after story. Despite publishers' excuses, delays, and rejections, she gamely persisted in sending her stories out to many of the leading literary magazines of the day—*Temple Bar, Argosy, The Queen, The Gentlewoman,* and others.

Her greatest support came from her continued correspondence with her friend Maud Diver, who wrote with constancy from Ceylon. Corresponding with her parents, now in Southern England, also provided some comfort. In 1893, Lockwood had retired from his position in Lahore, and he and Alice had returned to England. Rudyard, married to Carrie, living in Vermont and moving farther and farther away from the family, had little time for Trix. Already famous and traveling the world, he never returned to live in India after the age of twenty-three. Great distances separated Trix from the members of the Family Square.

Most of Trix's stories were not unlike the 'Plain Tales from the Hills' she had written years earlier. They were longer but still light and clever. In April 1894, *The Pall Mall Magazine* accepted 'The Little Pink House', although to Trix's annoyance, they did not publish it until August. This unusually dark story is a stark cautionary tale about an innocent English girl who comes to India to marry but refuses, with fatal consequences, to alter her way of life. With no curiosity or interest in the East, 'she lived in India, save for the wide difference of heat, discomfort, and loneliness,

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exactly as she would have lived in England'.[1] In March 1895, the editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette* published 'A Woman of Seasons'[2], after having expressed reservations about its length. The story has a sophisticated and suspenseful structure. The narrator of the story (and the reader) is intrigued and mystified by a woman she meets at a party, who, on every subsequent meeting, seems to be a different person. At first, she is self-centred and frivolous, later she is charitable and self-sacrificing, later still she is dreamy and debauched. Eventually, the baffled narrator learns that the woman is a series of poses, lies, and make-believe.

Although the narrator solves the riddle of the woman's personality variations, she never understands why the woman chooses to present herself in these poses, nor how these false selves serve her for good or ill. A woman with no true self, who invents a false self or a series of false selves is a character who appears repeatedly in Trix's fiction. Trix was quick to hear a false note or notice a fake attitude and was particularly scornful of attitudinizing, especially over children. She took wicked pleasure in reprising the 'come-and-be-kissed-my-precious' scenes that featured reluctant children and gushing adults that had been performed before her. The woman of seasons is a series of attitudes and has no true self.

Trix well understood the necessity and the utility of pretence. Imposture was a strategy many women used to land a desirable husband, without even acknowledging or understanding what they were doing. Many ordinary, clever women, not imposters or outlaws, practiced being what they thought men wanted them to be. They did not consider themselves to be liars or deceivers, but simply alert and aware of the values of the society in which they lived. Most women had internalized their society's preferred feminine roles and felt these roles as internal assumptions, not as external controls. Pretence, sometimes as inconsequential as professing an interest in sport or orchids or as crucial as declaring love or swearing fidelity, was not viewed as unnatural or untruthful. Trix, having to disguise her true feelings from Mrs Holloway as a child, was especially sensitive to pretence and especially keen in spotting and describing it. Although she understood the initial pain

1 Beatrice Kipling, 'The Little Pink House', *The Pall Mall Magazine* (1894); reprinted in Lorna Lee, pp. 297–304.

2 Beatrice Kipling, 'A Woman of Seasons', *The Pall Mall Gazette, March* (*1895*).

and the eventual peril of disguising and denying one's true self, she was reluctant to expose these consequences too fiercely or explore them too deeply. Her society approved and rewarded pretence when it was applied gracefully, gently, or, best of all, invisibly.

It is likely that Trix completed, although she did not publish, a short story titled 'Ricochet or Boomerang's Return'[3] during this time. The story focuses on a young and attractive unmarried woman, who, as a caprice, weaves a complicated web of malice and deceit. After making mischief for a husband and wife and sowing discord between them, she transfers her affection from the husband to his elder brother. The brother flirts and toys with her, as she chatters and giggles. While her feelings actually grow deeper, his remain shallow. He interprets her malicious and flirtatious behaviours as part of her light and silly nature and never takes her seriously. And thus, her own spite and hatred spoil her chances to capture a man she cares for. The story ends, 'She at the one time of her life when straightness mattered most, was deliberately crooked'.[4]

The story is flawed, as many of Trix's stories are, by the young woman's lack of motivation. She is unaccountably malicious and spiteful. She hardly cares for the husband she tries to seduce and has no reason at all to hate the wife. Yet she manoeuvres and manipulates with great energy and some invention to win the husband's favour and deride and diminish the wife. Why she bothers to do this is never explained. When she transfers her attentions onto the brother and is rejected, she suffers appropriately. But her punishment is hardly the ingenious retaliation the title of the story promises. Like May in *The Heart of a Maid*, this young woman seems insufficiently motivated in her bad nature and her bad behaviour. She, at least, is properly punished for her malice.

Trix also completed the only short love story she ever wrote but was afraid her parents would think she had not handled the subject delicately enough. 'Waiting for Cargo' was the simple name of this story, which did not survive her parents' scrutiny or her own reservations.

3 Alice Fleming, 'Ricochet or Boomerang's Return', dated 30.12.36 but probably from the mid-1890s. Never published, the manuscript is written in a very neat, even hand, as if copied from another earlier and messier manuscript, probably dating from this earlier period, mid-1890s. Trix definitely did not write this in 1936.

4 Ibid. In manuscript form.

Having competently managed her household and cared for her often ailing and complaining husband, Trix gained permission to return alone for a visit to England. She had been separated from her parents for two years. In the spring of 1895, Trix set sail for England without Jack. On the way, she stopped in Ceylon for a three-day visit with Maud. This was a rare treat, a chance to spend a little time with Maud's husband Thomas and her toddler son Cyril, but most importantly a time to talk at length with Maud. Although Maud was thin and pale-cheeked, she talked energetically and enthusiastically about her work, detailing her short story ideas and encouraging Trix's plan for her second novel. This brief visit strengthened Trix's resolve to begin the new novel she had been mulling over for many years. The two old friends spent their time together in what Trix called an 'orgie of talk'.[5] The all-night conversations so exhausted Trix that she slept the whole day after her visit, but she enjoyed every minute of her time with Maud.

From Ceylon, she sailed for England on the S.S. Simla and, by July, arrived in London. Most of this visit was spent with the Kipling parents in Tisbury. Lockwood and Alice had settled in a modest pleasant house, The Gables, in Tisbury, Wiltshire—about a dozen miles from Salisbury. They had considered settling in Rottingdean, near the Burne-Joneses, but Alice did not wish to be too close to her sister. Tisbury was sufficiently distant from all her relatives.

From the summer of 1895 until the spring of 1896, Trix remained in Tisbury with her parents. She took one break in the fall of 1895 to dutifully visit her in-laws in Scotland. As before, she was hurt by the small-minded prudery of her mother-in-law, who made little effort to hide her low opinion of her son's shallow and childless bride.

Without the distractions of caring for Jack, running a household, and maintaining a social schedule, Trix had time to focus on her own work. During this relaxed and calm year in Tisbury, Trix worked steadily on her second novel, *A Pinchbeck Goddess*. As a new bride almost a decade earlier, Trix had written her first novel, *The Heart of a Maid*, also while staying with her parents when Jack was in Burma on the Survey. Then, as now, Lockwood and Alice provided a peaceful and private space for Trix. This time, Trix showed them the manuscript in progress and welcomed their comments and suggestions. With Lockwood and Alice,

5 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 20 June 1897.

both writers, immediately involved in the work, Trix completed a draft of her second novel.

In the summer of 1896, just as Trix was leaving for the return to India, she missed the chance to meet with Rudyard and Carrie, who were to return from their disastrous American experiment just a few months later in September. Rudyard and Carrie had tried to live near Carrie's family in Brattleboro, Vermont, building a house, 'Naulahka', there. This experiment had ended badly with accusations, law suits, and estrangements.

On her return to India, Trix joined Jack at Mussoorie, one of the less fashionable hill stations. During this hot season, she allowed herself to ignore many of the usual entertainments and spent much of her time writing—correcting and refining *Pinchbeck*. She wrote other small pieces, including verses titled 'The Cry of the Mother', which caused a stir. The poem, about the sorrows of young mothers whose children return to England, excited passionate public argument in *The Pioneer*.[6] The poem prompted a heated exchange of letters, including, on the one hand, complaint that the poem was morbid, dreary, and sentimental and, on the other hand, praise for its true deep feeling. Trix was thrilled to have caused a controversy in print.

Although Trix always claimed that her writing wasn't serious, referring to her short pieces published in *The Pioneer* as 'Pi scribbles'[7], her private thoughts and hopes may have been very different. To Maud, she wrote that her stories were just for her own amusement. It was her household duties that demanded and deserved her serious attention. If she neglected the house in order to write, she felt as much to blame as if her 'diversion took the form of larking about with silly boys'.[8] At the same time, she was pleased and perhaps even proud that she was engaged in an activity that wasn't entirely frivolous. She was a writer. She had published a novel and hoped soon to publish another. She detailed to Maud an incident that had occurred one day at the club. She had been relaxing on the cool shaded veranda when a man approached her and engaged her in conversation. He had heard from talk around the club that she was about to go to camp with her husband and asked her about her preparations. He was poised to give her suggestions of

6 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 30 July 1896.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.

ways to pass the time, but Trix assured him that she had plenty to do to occupy herself. Nonetheless, the kind man urged her to take up needle work. He recommended fret work as a fine resource for a woman in camp. Trix was annoyed by the man's presumption and condescension. She did not need to take up stupid, senseless stitching; she was writing fiction for publication. She and her correspondent Maud were not like other silly women. They were serious writers. In fact, as she prepared for camp in July 1896, Trix was imagining yet another novel, a third. Writing stories was a source of pleasure and pride, although she modestly and repeatedly asserted that the joy of it was 'utterly even ludicrously out of proportion to the worth of the thing'.[9]

While Trix was writing her light entertainments and completing her comic novel, a group of British women novelists were introducing changes to the English novel. During the years between Trix's first and second novel, 1890–1897, a 'New Realism' about the relations between the sexes appeared in fiction, featuring a rebellious heroine, the 'New Woman'. This 'New Woman', drawn in opposition to the innocent virgin or the angel about the house, was clever, ambitious, independent, and plain-spoken. She challenged age-old ideals of femininity and maternity. She wanted power, autonomy, and a place in public life. She spoke frankly about taboo subjects including sex, male promiscuity, and venereal disease. Dissatisfied with her lot in life, she refused to accept marriage and motherhood as her only destiny. She challenged social norms in order to fulfil herself—emotionally, sexually, artistically, and politically. She forcefully articulated her anger at the inequities women suffered. These heroines talked, often to excess.[10]

'New Woman' novels often began with an innocent and trusting heroine marrying a man she hardly knew. She was immediately confronted with the severe limitations of wifely duty. The new bride, possessing few political rights and oppressed by an unsympathetic husband, became disenchanted with her role as a wife and explored other unconventional and temporary ways to find fulfilment. At every turn, she was frustrated and thwarted. Eventually, she was forced to conform to her society, often with a better-chosen second husband. In

9 Ibid.

10 Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

the end, these exceptional women either had to conform to the demands of their societies and accept traditional feminine roles or they had to accept life as misfits or outcasts. Alternative but terrible options were always available—renunciation, self-sacrifice, madness, and suicide.

Novelists discovered that there was no way to portray women as happy and satisfied outside of their domestic roles. Even when these novels included fierce indictments of society, and of marriage in particular, they concluded by returning their heroines to the domestic sphere, thus unintentionally supporting old-fashioned values and age-old roles. With nowhere to anchor their rebellious heroines, they usually took them shakily home. These conclusions felt contradictory to the story just concluded and were deeply unsatisfying.

Working mostly within the traditional novel form, women novelists portrayed the real lives of women in often shocking detail. Sarah Grand in *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), Emma Frances Brooke in *A Superfluous Woman*, (1894), Ella Hepworth Dixon in *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894), Mona Caird in *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), *Nobody's Fault* by Netta Syrett (1895), and *Gallia*, by Menie Muriel Downie (1896) described women's psychological pain as well as their physical experience of sex and childbirth. Though criticized as primitive in style and brutal in tone by male critics, many of these novels were sensational best-sellers. Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), a long polemical novel with surprising twists and turns, was a huge and scandalous success.

Nowhere does Trix mention any of these novels, authors, or their daring subjects, but it seems very likely that she read *The Heavenly Twins* and *The Beth Book* by Sarah Grand. Grand's novels were published by Heinemann, a well-known publisher (and soon to be Trix's publisher), and they were widely read. It would be surprising if she did not know of the recent trends in feminist fiction and had not read some of these novels, even though they were very different from her own fiction and the fictions of her brother and her best friend. Trix had to be aware of the ongoing struggle for women rights, especially the dramatic fight for the vote for women. Trix made only one mention of the suffrage movement in a brief postscript to a letter to Maud. 'I loathe Suffragette methods—& think they are retarding & degrading the cause of women thereby—but lonely women of independent means—widows or maids who pay

taxes—ought in common fairness to have votes'.[11] Trix's objection is to methods; she does not address the larger issue of the denial of the vote to married women. As always, she makes a case for a specific instance while ignoring the larger issue of women's rights. Similarly, she never questioned the role of the British in the rule of India nor the relations between the ruling British class and the many castes of Indians.

The novels Trix does mention are by older, well-known, and mostly male novelists—American short story writer and novelist Bret Harte, French novelists (Trix could read French easily but not speak it) and short story writers, Pierre Loti, Paul Bourget, Guy de Maupassant, Victor Hugo, Alphonse Daudet, Alexandre Dumas, and Henri Greville (pen name for Alice Marie Celeste Durand); English novelists, Henry Seton Merriman, William Thackeray, Thomas Hardy, Jane Austen, and, of course, Dickens; and the Scottish novelist Samuel Crockett.

It seems likely that Trix was reading many contemporary novels, especially those written by women and those set in India. She mentioned Flora Annie Steel's mutiny book, *On the Face of the Waters* (1896), novels by Edna Lyall, Mary E. Wilkins, and Marie Coselle, and she indicated a familiarity with the current India-based writers whose stories appeared in the same magazines as her own. When Maud's first imperial romance novel was rejected, Trix recommended a more serious and less 'modern' type of publisher, indicating her knowledge of current trends in publishing. She encouraged Maud to persevere and sympathized with her disappointment.

> Don't you feel inclined to try somewhere else dear—when you have the M.S. all ready it seems to me such a pity not to. Who are the people who publish Edna Lyall's books? Not that you are in the least Edna Lyallish—but they at any rate like stories dealing with moral purposes & high endeavor. I would certainly try getting another opinion on it if I were you. One refusal is nothing—though don't I know how cast down a 'No thank you' makes one feel—Heart up dear friend & try again—As to title I prefer A Labour of Love! You know.[12]

Maud, like Lyall (the pen name of Ada Ellen Bayly) and many others was writing in this high moral vein, publishing hugely popular romantic

11 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 5 March 1908.

12 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 5 December 1896; Edna Lyall is the pseudonym of Ada Ellen Bayly (1857–1903), an English novelist.

tales. Trix often supplied the titles for Maud's stories and permitted her to use the title of her own first novel, 'The Heart of a Maid'. Maud's early stories—'Sunia: A Himalayan Idyll', 'A Brahman's Honour', 'A Moment's Madness', 'Feet of Clay', and 'When Beauty Fades' were published in the same magazines as Trix's stories.

Maud's early romantic tales had high moral purpose as well as elevated language, ornate description, and intense feeling. 'Sunia: A Himalayan Idyll', one of Maud's first published stories was published by *Longman's Magazine* in 1898. The story begins with this dramatic description of the scene. 'The pearly glimmer of dawn was over the mountains; the far-off snows looked indescribably pale and pure against the dove-like tones of the sky'. Into this landscape is introduced a girl

> The face was a pure oval, with flower-like curves of cheek and chin, and eyes of that rare pale brown which is only found among true Hill folk, and that none too frequently. A flower-like silver ornament in one of her delicate nostrils seemed set there with coquettish intent to accentuate its exquisitely tender curves. The soft fullness of her lips suggested passionate possibilities, and the scarlet of betel-nut upon them made an enchanting incident of colour amid the dusky tints of her face and dress.[13]

A brave Englishman saves this girl from being mauled by a huge shaggy bear. After securing the prize, he:

> found himself brought to a standstill by two brown arms, that clung about his boots, whilst a voice from the earth blessed him fervently and fulsomely after the fashion of the East. Stooping, he had raised the girl to her feet, with reassuring words, and, in so doing, had looked upon Sunia's face for the first time—a sensation no man would ever be likely to forget.[14]

At the dramatic conclusion of the story, the girl offers up her arm to the fatal bite of a poisonous snake rather than allow its venom to harm the man she worships and adores. Their love is never spoken.

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13 Maud Diver, 'Sunia: A Himalayan Idyll', *Longman's Magazine* (1898). Maud Diver's novels when she began to publish them a decade later, were imperial romances, daring in their depiction of inter-racial love affairs but conventional in most other ways. Her first novel, *Captain Desmond, V.C.*, was published in 1907. Her subsequent novels, *The Great Amulet*, *Candles in the Wind*, *Far to Seek* and many more made her a global bestseller in the first half of the twentieth century.

14 Ibid.

Trix criticized her friend's stories, often warning her against overwriting. She praised 'Sunia' for its picturesque drama. She advised about pacing, delicacy, character development, and foreshadowing. She based her criticism on her own very specific and personal reactions to the text, not based on any theory of writing. Sometimes she was pleased simply by the style of a novel. Sometimes she read for the swing and sweep of the story and ignored the style. Inconsistencies didn't trouble her, but her lack of formal literary training did. She confessed to Maud, 'I wish I did know anything of the theory & technique of writing—I grope for it so very vaguely—I was thinking the other day of the things chiefly trifles that I think important to remember when one writes & I wrote them down & send them to amuse you'.[15]

When, years after publishing her first novel, Trix decided to attempt a second, she ignored traditional romance plots, new feminist trends, and her own satiric gifts, and looked backward. She returned to the safety and familiarity of a story from a decade earlier, one of the anonymously published *Plain Tales from the Hills* from 1886. The new novel, *A Pinchbeck Goddess,* was an expanded version of this brief and not especially memorable piece. Trix had been turning this plot of elaborate disguise over in her mind for a long time.

A Pinchbeck Goddess[16] has, as its central character, an imposter, a woman who takes on an actual disguise. When she first appears, she is young, unmarried, disdainful, and frigid. Her name is Madeline. When we meet her again, she is older, widowed, loud, and vulgar. Her name is Winnie.

The Introduction of the novel begins on shipboard, where *The Heart of a Maid* left off. A young woman is traveling from Bombay to England after a mortifying defeat. Madeline, almost thirty years old, is returning to England to be with her tyrannical Aunt Agatha after an unfortunate season in India. She was raised an orphan by this terrible aunt, who had monitored her every thought. Thus, she had learned to conceal her real thoughts and fabricate false ones. An older lady had taken her to India for a year with the intention of finding her a husband. Madeline had stubbornly and disdainfully resisted these matrimonial schemes, which she found humiliating. After driving away all the men who had

15 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 1 May 1897.

16 J. M. Fleming (Alice M. Kipling), *A Pinchbeck Goddess*; dedicated 'To My Brother'.

approached her, she had become morbid and bitter. Having made poor use of her natural beauty, she returned home with no hope for the future. She had been the author of her own defeat. As she arrives in England, she learns that her detested Aunt Agatha has died.

In Chapter I, the scene and characters abruptly change. Without explanation, a new set of characters is introduced in a new setting. Winnie and Janet are unpacking in Simla, the summer hill station for the British in India. Winnie is the opposite of Madeline, who was a 'dowdy frump'. Winnie is a pinchbeck (sham, spurious, counterfeit) goddess. Winnie's husband has died, and she has a six-year-old daughter she has left behind in England. She is a vulgar woman who dyes her hair, wears makeup, and ornaments herself with gaudy jewels.

A large cast of female characters take their places in the novel. Nancy Ivey is a sweet young girl, who loves Noel Curtis, who loves her in return but whose prospects are uncertain. Lilian is an ungenerous wife with an unhappy temperament, whose husband disciplines her by being cold, distant, and silent. There is a corresponding cast of male characters. Gilmour, an eligible and charming man, is attracted to Winnie, despite her paint and diamonds. Strutham-Ingram is also drawn to Winnie. Carelessly, she encourages him. When he proposes to her, while out riding, she regrets that she had encouraged him and blames herself for toying with his feelings. Sholto Adare loves Nancy Ivey and proposes to her on horseback. Not knowing how to respond, she consults her mother, who encourages her to accept the proposal. Even though she does not love him, she seriously considers marrying him. He is rich. Noel Curtis, a young man unsure of his financial future, loves Nancy but postpones making his feelings known.

Winnie goes to parties where she dances and flirts. She is obviously looking for a second husband to replace her first. Gilmour pursues Winnie against his own better judgment. Even though she is a painted woman with a child, he cannot help but love her. He, like everyone else in this society, believes Winnie to be an adventuress.

There have been some hints that Winnie may be Madeline. A reader, vigilant for more clues, has her suspicions confirmed at this mid-point, when Winnie refers to her past and her Aunt Agatha. It is clear now that Winnie is Madeline.

Nancy still does not know how to respond to Sholto's proposal. She knows that she does not love him. Plagued by indecision, she wonders how a young girl makes this choice. Should she follow her heart or the advice and encouragement of family and friends? Happily, Curtis relieves her of this dilemma by declaring himself. Nancy is able to reject Sholto and accept the man she really loves. But she could easily have accepted Sholto. No one tells her not to, and many encourage her to.

Lilian, who had bitterly excoriated her husband for his cold, unresponsive, punishing treatment, is suddenly transformed by pregnancy. Just the promise of motherhood overturns her perverse nature.

When Winnie attends a fancy-dress ball, where Madeline had been a disaster, she is a vulgar triumph. She is, by her own design, foolish, gaudy, and indelicate. Gilmour is sickened by the performance. But he loves her in spite of everything. When he proposes, Winnie tells him the story of her imposture. She confesses that she is not a widow but a 'spinster in a wig'. She had been a dour creature, but now she will sparkle. She is amazed that Gilmour was attracted to her, insisting that he was drawn to the tinsel and show. He protests. She explains that she had purposely made herself disagreeable. At last, she will be happy. She will marry Gilmour, who loves her and whom she loves.

The structure of the novel is purposefully confusing. The Introduction—the Madeline chapter, which is psychologically complex and intriguing, hangs suspended. It stays in a reader's mind, but uneasily and uncomfortably. A reader is tempted and then encouraged to think that Madeline is Winnie, but this supposition is not confirmed for many chapters. Trix artfully delays the revelation.

But once the identification is confirmed, the imposture exposed, it remains troubling. It feels oddly unmotivated and implausible. If Madeline wants to find a husband and make a good marriage, it would have been far more reasonable for her to return in a simple, artless pose and to win her man with this real and lovely self. Revenge for Madeline's humiliation seems the most plausible explanation for her disguise, but Winnie never assigns this as her motive. She is trying to find a husband, but it is unclear why she tries in this self-denying and possibly self-defeating manner. She seems to be proving something, but it isn't clear if what she is proving is that she can be attractive to men, that she can

undo her past defeat, or that she can make fools of the men whom she encouraged to humiliate and reject her.

The heroine runs cold and then hot. If Madeline's excessive coldness repels men, then Winnie's excessive heat should also turn them away. She should attract men and especially the right man only when she arrives at her true correct temperature—warmth. But the hero of the story, Gilmour, loves Winnie in spite of her imposture. He sees the real her behind the disguise. This is difficult for a reader to accept, as a reader cannot see the real her. She never reveals herself and she seems not to know who the real her is. How can she know that Gilmour is seeing the real her when she doesn't seem to know who she is? Where May of *The Heart of a Maid* knew exactly who she was and what her limitations were, Madeline/Winnie seems not to understand herself or her actions. Her first act of make-believe ends in unanticipated failure, her second in unwarranted success. She is surprised by both.

The opening chapter of the novel—the history of Madeline's failure—is the most compelling part of the novel. Trix feelingly described Madeline's original discomfort at being paraded on the marriage market. During her early seasons at Simla, Trix felt humiliated, exposed, and in peril of having the accept a proposal she was not ready to entertain. Thus, she understood this feeling well.

The minor character Lilian is also especially well-drawn. Lilian, like May in *The Heart of a Maid,* has an ungenerous and unhappy temperament. She is married to Gilbert, a cold, undemonstrative man who disciplines her with silence and distance. When she is desperately lonely and unhappy, she wonders, 'Did other women feel like this? Did they, too, sit at home doing little services for their husbands while they half hated them? That was wicked, but it was the truth; Gilbert was hateful'.[17] Neither Lilian nor Gilbert changes, but Lilian is happily transformed by becoming a mother.

Lilian's insupportable marriage resembles May's miserable marriage to Percy. Trix was especially deft at portraying these very troubled unions. Pregnancy and childbirth cure both Lilian and May and suggest that Trix believed becoming a mother had transformative power.

17 'Chapter 10' in ibid.

Both *Pinchbeck* and *Heart of a Maid* feature perverse characters, Madeline and May—women who thwart their own happiness by being stubborn, unyielding, and headstrong. Trix supplies little explanation for why they are so contrary and difficult. It is not the fault of society or of the institution of marriage. It is the fault of the women themselves. These women were brought up away from their mothers. May in *Heart of a Maid* has a living mother, who only wants to marry her off and is (she believes) partly responsible for the death of her baby. In *Pinchbeck Goddess*, Madeline's mother is dead, and she is raised by an evil aunt, also dead by the time of the main action of the novel. So, both girls are deficient in feeling because they did not have maternal love. They suffer from 'mother want'. This inner deficiency is all that is provided to explain their unhappy temperaments.

At the end of *Maid*, May vows to change. She will bend her ungenerous and unyielding nature into a better shape. This will not be pretence but will be a true alteration of her character. But a reader never gets to see this change. The novel ends before the transformation can be attempted. At the end of *Pinchbeck,* Winnie/Madeline is allowed to drop her masks to reveal her genuine self. She claims that beneath the disguises is a loving woman who will marry successfully. A reader does not get to see this softened creature but must accept on faith that behind the two artfully constructed masks is a woman of genuine feeling.

The heroines of Trix's two novels are, first, a woman with an unhappy and ungenerous nature who promises to change in a future that never arrives, and second, a woman who disguises her true nature under two false fronts and claims, but never exhibits, the sweet nature beneath. The happy natures are a frail promise and an unpersuasive assertion. A truly loving, caring, generous nature is something Trix was unable to envision with sufficient clarity to write. The angry nature that a reader feels behind both of these characters is something Trix did know well and did present well. But this was as far as she could go. She could not or would not explore where this anger came from and what its more damaging consequences were. But she clearly situated the problem as internal, not coming from the external society.

What is most remarkable about May is that she does not disguise her feelings at all. She tells Anstruther from the start that she does not love him and does not believe she ever will. Despite this icy confession,

Percy marries her. Later in the novel, she does not disguise her furious, ferocious anger at the death of her baby. She never pretends. At the very end of the novel, she considers changing her character, not disguising it, but really experiencing an alteration of character. But she is unable even to imagine this change clearly, and thus a reader never gets to see it. Total lack of pretence, while satisfying in itself, seems to lead nowhere, to a dead end. May is left literally adrift.

Winnie, on the other hand, only pretends. Her first pretence as Madeleine is the result of feeling demeaned as an object. Her response to this humiliation is to become cold and forbidding. While self-defeating, this response feels sensible and understandable. Winnie's second disguise is not only unhelpful but also baffling. She returns in an ugly, garish costume, which, while disgusting most men, does not deter Gilmour, the one man she wants to attract. Gilmour ignores the gaudy disguise and unexpectedly and unreasonably loves her in spite of it. But she seems merely lucky. Gilmour's love is an undeserved surprise. She could easily have ruined her chances a second time.

In her fiction, Trix always placed the blame for women's unhappiness on the inner nature of the women themselves. She never blamed her society or its institutions. Trix's unwillingness to think deeply or to write fully and truly about her society's treatment of women resulted in a double loss. First, she damaged her own novels by giving her heroines insufficient motivations and by giving her plots inadequate conclusions. And second, she failed to write the (possibly wicked satiric) novels about thwarted female expectations that she could have composed with pleasure and perhaps success.

As soon as Trix completed the novel to her own satisfaction, she began, with help from her mother and father, to search for a publisher. Rudyard had shepherded *The Heart of a Maid* through publication, but this time the task fell to her and her parents. She submitted *Pinchbeck* to several publishers and entered into prolonged negotiations for the best possible deal. She accepted an offer from Watt, who submitted it unsuccessfully to *The Queen*, *The Pioneer*, and *The Gentlewoman* for serial publication. After waiting a long time for Watt to place the novel, she removed it from him. She then sent it on to the well-respected publisher, Heinemann, hoping that they would accept it. And on 5 December 1896, four months after submission, Trix was happy to report to Maud, 'My news is that the

"Pinchbeck" has been accepted in a kind of a sort of a way'.[18] Heinemann had written to her, 'I have read Mrs Flemings' M.S. & although it has quite the qualities of a good story, it is I fear somewhat out of date in its treatment. I think it would be better handled by a firm less determinedly modern than mine—However, if Mrs Fleming wishes me to publish it in preference to some one else I would do so, because the book is entirely charming & its publication so creditable'.[19] He agreed to take it on, offering to publish it in a cheap form and with no royalties. Compared to the 'New Woman' novels Heinemann was publishing, it certainly was 'out of date'. Trix hesitated but soon agreed to this unspectacular offer, preferring to have *Pinchbeck* published by a good and well-known firm rather than to get more money from some obscure house.

Trix's second novel, *A Pinchbeck Goddess*, was finally published on 12 February 1897 and then republished in March by D. Appleton and Company, a division of Heinemann. It appeared under the name 'Mrs J. M. Fleming (Alice M. Kipling)' and was dedicated 'To My Brother'.[20]

Well before the novel was published, Trix found fault with it and worried about the flaws that others would find. She had shown the novel in manuscript form to her parents and, having incorporated their suggestions and corrections, was sure of their approval. She felt certain of Maud's good opinion as well, but confessed, 'I'm rather shaking in my shoes & a few snubbing or scathing notices feel at present about all I have to hope for'.[21]

As soon as the novel was published, Trix nervously awaited the reviews. When they arrived, she reported them to Maud.

> I've had four little reviews thus far—the best & longest being in 'The Scotsman' [...] The general treatment in 'A Pinchbeck Goddess' in entirely original & possesses a brilliance that defies comparison' — Each character is excellent in its way— [...] The 'Daily Telegraph' is very down both on me & Simla 'A tale almost wholly devoted to Simla life, or rather Simla frivolity, for what is so elaborately described can only by a stretch of language be called life! — She confines herself to trifling incidents & to dialogue for the most part so vapid that the average man will probably wonder why an artist should thing such babble worth recording— This

18 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 5 December 1896.
19 Ibid.
20 J. M. Fleming (Alice M. Kipling), *A Pinchbeck Goddess*.
21 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 5 December 1896.

> budget of inane chatter serves no artistic purpose. It yields no instruction & affords but the slightest modicum of amusement'. There. Observe the joys of publishing a little book! And did you ever hear of the 'Morning Leader'? I never did—It's been good enough to devote half a column—signed D. Pitkethly — chiefly to finding fault with Pinch — but with this comforting conclusion. 'For Mrs 'Fleming, despite her fatal gift of quotation, her brilliant small talk, her very ordinary love affairs, her commonplace colonels, majors & aides-de-camp, has just that grace of narration that saves her novel from collapse'. Also I am invited next time to 'make a nobler use of her undoubtedly rich resources'.[22]

''Vanity Fair'' of all papers gave me an amazing notice & says of Winnie, "a wittier more delightful person I have not made the acquaintance of for many a long novel [...] a real & very charming woman"—There—that made me purr like anything!'[23] But 'Bookman' took her to task for the improbable plot, 'which has some common place smartness in it & nothing much better'.[24] 'How lucky I've been not to have heaps more reviews like that,' she reported light-heartedly to Maud. But Trix herself worried that the novel 'was as dull as a vanilla wafer & not half as crisp!'[25]

While negotiating with publishers to get *Pinchbeck* into print and then waiting for publication and reviews, Trix considered her next fiction. 'I've written of frivols in India & now I want to write of the other side of the shield,'[26] she wrote confidently to Maud. She wanted to write something new and different. She was done with frivolity.

She had in mind two novels, both featuring widows. One was tentatively titled 'Conquering Shadow' and was, in her own estimation, a fearfully gloomy tale. The other, titled 'Their Husband', was, in her opinion, even more disturbing. Trix had dark plots on her mind, featuring heroines with some experience, not innocent virgins. When thinking about publishing her third, more serious novel, she became worried that it would shock her 'petty prim Mamma-in-law'[27] and planned to publish it under a pseudonym.

22 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 15 March 1897.
23 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 1 May 1897.
24 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 28 June 1897.
25 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 26 June 1897.
26 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 28 June 1897.
27 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 30 July 1896.

She was especially stuck over one novel she had titled 'A Stopgap'. This novel included what she referred to as the 'sex question'. The sex question the novel posed was a very specific sex/marital quandary, not one of the larger issues of sexual freedom and equality being posed by the feminist novelists of the period. Trix's widowed heroine, Hester, after the death of her beloved first husband, makes a very particular bargain—a convenient second marriage without sex—and then is surprised and distressed when the husband insists on revising the arrangement. She resists accepting the new terms, but because of her love and loyalty to the living and the dead, she feels she must yield. Trix got as far as, 'Then Viola [the child] dies & her death sets H. free & she does--'[28] There Trix stopped. Like May in *The Heart of a Maid*, the heroine is free in the end, but to go where? The conditions of the marital bargain and the eventual breakdown of trust are unique and personal. They are not posed as representative of anything larger or more significant. The plot touches on sex but shies away from making any larger claims about male power and betrayal or female submission and loyalty. Feminist novels of the period questioned the sexual double standard, encouraged female sexual exploration, and castigated men for their sexual freedom and self-serving moral code of conduct. Trix moved near to these issues but never engaged them.

> I've written at great length—could one write such a story—or is it best left alone? The notion of it is a woman who has spent all the passionate love of her nature on one object—& whose spirit suffers cruelly from the bondage of the flesh. I think one could do it without making Forbes seem a brute—or Hester an idiot. Tell me honestly what you think—I've only actually written the first three chapters—I think it would be better if I could [...] finish some of the ten stories begun—half done & projected [...] but Hester sticks in my mind somehow. I fear I must write her to get rid of her—You must be nearly worn out with all this![29]

The first three chapters of the novel have not survived. Trix was unsure if she could make the man tolerable in his selfishness and the woman sympathetic in her submission. And, as before, she was unable to fashion an appropriate and satisfying ending. She abandoned this novel.

28 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 26 January 1897.
29 Ibid.

She had in mind the plot for another novel for which she had many possible titles, all of which she hated—'Lighthearted', 'A Chosen Fate', 'A Far Cry', 'Overseas Alone', 'While Others Dance & Play'. At the centre of the novel is a bride who comes to India with pleasant expectations and is overwhelmed by the loneliness, dreariness, heat, and lack of civilization. She has a baby who dies, and after much suffering, she herself dies of cholera. In a final scene, her husband drives her body swathed in a waterproof sheet in his bamboo cart and feels irritated as the dreadful thing jolts and bangs over the rough roads. When the sheeted bundle shifts, he almost swears at it. 'Am I too horrible?' Trix asked Maud of this brutally vivid and emotionally complicated image.[30]

While she was full of plots, characters, and titles, she could not manage to settle on any one idea. She wanted to do something different, to tell a possibly disturbing tale. She fretted and dithered, writing to Maud, 'My comfort in not writing now is that I feel as though 'Lighthearted' or 'A Chosen Fate' or whatever the name of my new novel will be was simmering in my head & would be none the worse of the little delay'. And she added, 'Remember that I wrote it [Pinchbeck] more than two years ago & should never care to do anything so frivolous again.[31]

She was 'chock a block with notions for stories long and short' but unable to work any of them out. Trying to organize herself, she made herself a list called 'Many Intentions' where she wrote down all her projected stories, three novels—'Conquering Shadows', 'A Stopgap', and 'Her Womanhood;' four longish short stories — 'The Indian Girl', 'Verona's Summer', 'Under Changed Skies', and 'Where Hooghli Flows'; and heaps of short stories, some of which had been on her mind for years. Four of them were half written—'The Last Theft', The Little Footprints', 'Janie's Man', and 'Rubbish Games'.[32] Six more were very clear in her mind. But she was unable to begin most of them, no less finish any one of them.

She seriously considered her Indian story, titled 'Where Hooghli Flows', which was set in old Calcutta more than a hundred years in the past, but abandoned it as hopeless. She stopped working on 'Rubbish Games', a story about children, because she recognized sadly that she

30 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 28 June 1897.
31 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 1 May 1897.
32 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 12 August 1897.

really didn't have enough contact with children to describe their ways and create their words.

Moody and dissatisfied, Trix wrote a lot, but completed little, and approved of less. Although she complained of her inability to get down to work and compared her laziness always unfavourably to Maud's dedication, she was, in fact, writing many pages. She just wasn't satisfied with any of them. More than ever, she deprecated her own modest efforts compared to Maud's progress. 'Your novel nearly twice as long as mine & in its whole scheme & structure is as an eagle compared to a canary bird! You soar while I cheap & twitter'.[33]

Reporting for the *Pioneer,* not dithering over fiction, was easy. After one of her experiences in camp, she submitted 'A Journey in the Jungle', a charming account of her time in the northwest provinces and the Kingdom of Oudh. It was published unsigned in the 21 February 1897 issue of *The Allahabad Pioneer*.[34] The piece, which recounts a long march on untrodden roads through high jungle grass, includes several sweet and fey observations, characteristic of Trix's writing. Always fond of animals, Trix described 'a dear elephant with charming manners and a fondness for sweet biscuits, who evinced no displeasure when his tail was bent into a loop'. Trix found him, 'breakfasting on half a haystack, and finding it rather monotonous'. She paid special attention to her own pampered terrier, who accompanied her on the trip and who, when fording the winding river Ool, 'was forced to swim, with great injury to her feelings, and a marked improvement to her complexion'. Trix complained about the unreliable promises she had believed about the abundance of game she would meet. 'We had been told that we should find ourselves in a sportsman's paradise, with geese and peafowl at every turn, a cloud of duck fluttering up from each *jhil,* quail and black partridge as common as butterflies and deer a very likely probability. But the game resembled the promised jam in Wonderland—'Jam to-morrow and jam yesterday but never jam to-day!' Wishing to conclude on a positive note, or being pressed by her editor to conclude on such a note, she ended her br**e**ezy report with this picture of Indian well-being. 'It was pleasant to see a fine potato field near a well, healthy neatly trenched plants that would be ready to dig in about a month.

33 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 30 July 1896.
34 Trix Kipling, 'A Journey in the Jungle', *The Allahabad Pioneer*, February (1897).

Pleasanter still it was to notice, during a detour through a village, that the children's naked little bodies displayed comfortable curves, that the women wore ornaments, that the ribs of the cattle were not in evidence, and that not one person asked for alms'.[35]

But her sad thoughts prevailed. Trix missed her more literary friend Sibyl Healey, who had recently returned to England. She sorely missed Maud, who had also returned to England and was living at Middle Bourne, Farnham in Surrey. Her dearest friends were worlds apart from her. In 1897, without the encouragement of her family and friends, Trix was dependent on Jack, whose approval and appreciation were always less than enthusiastic. Although Trix never openly complained about the tepid reception *of A Pinchbeck Goddess,* she could not have been happy that the novel caused so little stir. Trix had laboured long and hard on *Pinchbeck*, a story that had been in mind for more than a decade. Trix always disavowed her ambitions, deprecated her literary gifts, and minimized her distress over her poor reviews, but this modest pose served to hide a very real ambition. After the cool reception of her slight second novel, Trix was determined to write something more serious, but she found it difficult to finish her stories and wavered over the plot of her next novel. One story she did complete (possibly 'Ricochet') she could not sell. When her publisher, McClure, delayed and demurred over accepting her stories, she felt, 'fathoms five in depression'.[36] This phrase may have been a typical dramatic exaggeration, or it may have been a description of her mounting feelings of despair.

She repeatedly berated herself for sloth, comparing her laziness with Maud's steady application. 'My dear you are bound to succeed your energy & perseverance are so splendid—your letters always make one feel such a lazy lump—With ten times your leisure & opportunities for writing I just do nothing—while you go steadily quietly on'.[37]

Jack, who might have provided some little support, was at the time more needy than she. In the spring of 1897, he was going through a particularly bad time, suffering from a variety of physical complaints, which only exacerbated his worst personality traits. He was plagued by lumbago and insomnia and troubled by poor vision. Anxiously, he paced up and

35 Ibid.
36 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 16 March 1898.
37 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 26 January 1897.

down about the house, looking dreary and depressed. Granted a six-week leave from active duty, during which he was forbidden to use his eyes, he depended on Trix to read aloud to him for hours. Reading endlessly to Jack prevented her from writing her stories and delayed her replies to Maud's letters, but she felt a brute if she didn't try to relieve his misery.

After eight years of marriage, Trix was accustomed to Jack's temperament and to how often he annoyed her past irritation and into angry words. Writing to Maud, she complained mildly and often humorously about Jack's health and his moods, but she did not detail her many serious dissatisfactions. She lamented that she hardly saw her nieces and nephews and the many children she loved, but she did not describe this loss fully. 'It's a little unkind of Fate that I who am so fond of children have to get on without ever seeing my own nephews & nieces & the friends children—like your Cyril & Nettie's Kathleen that I feel belong to me too!'[38]

In May 1897, she wrote this unusually thoughtful and revealing letter to Maud.

> The lack in my life that a childless woman who loves children must feel—is a thing that I daren't let my thoughts dwell on—I have so much to thank God for that it would be wickedness itself to fret for the one good gift withheld. But the thought of squirrel [Maud's son, Cyril] & other darling children fills me with loving envy. But indeed I'm thankful for the health & strength that enables me to go into camp & be Jack's constant companion & more thankful than words can say for his unfailing love & goodness which seems to strengthen as the years go on. I do so despise & disagree with the modern notion that marriage kills love—all that is best worth having in love grows & strengthens & it's such a beautiful & wonderful thing that the chance attraction which begins at a dance or in the most frivolous surroundings possible should become the strongest & best feeling in two lives—I have a dread sometimes that Jack will feel lonely when we get old & miss children then—but sufficient unto the day & he certainly does not miss them now.[39]

It was extremely unusual for Trix to write so seriously about Jack and her feelings for children. Even with Maud, she rarely broached these sensitive subjects. Although she often complained about Jack's most irritating traits—his morose silence and stubbornness—she never

38 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 1 May 1897.
39 Ibid.

complained about his larger deficiencies and his possible betrayals. Here, she acknowledged her unhappiness about being childless but refused to dwell on this deep sorrow. She reminded herself and Maud that her marriage had its strengths and that Jack loved her unfailingly. But in these words of reassurance there is a shimmer of anxiety. She was grateful to be able to be with Jack in camp, but also concerned that were she not able, there could be a problem. Similarly, having failed to give Jack children, she dreaded what that could mean in the future.

Bedevilled by health issues which did not resolve, Jack applied for eighteen months furlough beginning in November 1897. Trix was thrilled with the idea of going back home so soon again. She had been in England in 1895. She was hopeful that the change in scene would improve Jack's health. Her own good health was not an issue. Her greatest pleasure was her expectation of being with Maud, who would be at last on the same continent. She wrote cheerfully to Maud, of having 'beautiful visions of our being at some dear little Scotch sea side place & getting you to come & stay with us. Our men should golf while you & I would watch Squirrel [Maud's son, Cyril] paddling & digging & talk!'[40]

When the furlough came through in early 1898, Trix and Jack returned to the Fleming home in Scotland, where Jack's two sisters lovingly looked after their brother. Relieved of Jack's constant care, Trix sank into herself. Dutifully, she stayed by Jack's side at his grim family home, and later, when he was well enough to travel, she miserably accompanied him on a golf holiday to St Andrews. Living with the stiff and unsympathetic Flemings in cold and damp Edinburgh, Trix became more and more depressed. Through the spring and summer, as Jack's health steadily improved, Trix's spirits declined.

Trix's fantasy of a sea-side holiday never became a reality. Never did Trix chat with Maud while Squirrel dug in the sand. Instead, in the fall of 1898, while in Edinburgh with the Flemings, Trix fell into deep despair, refusing to speak, eat, or move. To the Fleming family, this breakdown seemed sudden and unexplained, a complete surprise and shock. She had hidden her feelings well. She had given few indications to her parents, her brother, or her friend Maud of the true state of her mind. But her stability, always fragile, had been crumbling for some time.

40 Trix Kipling, letter to Maud Diver, 28 June 1897.